

Assessment of Tour Guide Training  
at the Cave of the Mounds

by:

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark Fenton", written over a horizontal line.

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## ABSTRACT

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Training in the tourism industry should be considered an essential part of an organization. Training can mean the difference between success and failure in the industry. The way an employee performs his job is just as important as the outcome, especially if an organization is looking to reduce variation in the delivery of its service package. (Bushwell and Williams, 2003)

The study took place at Cave of the Mounds located in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin. The central focus of this research was to investigate what employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training program for new tour guides. The primary goal of this study was to develop a certification evaluation program for new

tour guides which will increase tour uniformity and insure accurate and consistent information within a 1 hour time frame.

Based on the comparison to the literature and the analysis of the data collected recommendations can be made. It is imperative that the Cave of the Mounds provide successful orientation training program for new tour guides which is not only through and fast paced, but also allows new tour guides to gain the knowledge, skill, abilities, to develop accurate, factual, one hour tours. It is recommended that the Cave of the Mounds add an evaluation process to its training program. The Cave of the Mounds also needs to add clear certification criteria for all new tour guides to its training program. All tour guides should know what is expected of them before attempting to be certified. It is suggested that new tour guides be given a clear list of what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to be a successful certified tour guide. Keeping with this recommendation, new tour guides should be given a checklist to take with them while trailing tours. The goal of the checklist is to help new tour guides design a 1 hour tour. Finally, it is recommended that instead of new tour guides seeking out more advanced tour guides with questions there should be designated employees that new tour guides should go to with questions.

The majority of the survey respondents agreed with the statement “overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give, accurate, factual, 1 hour tours.” The previous recommendations will only help the Cave the Mounds to continue to provide premier new employee training.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

The Cave of the Mounds is located in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin twenty-five minutes west of Madison, Wisconsin. The Cave of the Mounds was discovered on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1939, while workers were blasting for limestone. The cave provides 1 hour guided tours year round. The peak tourist season begins Memorial Day weekend and extends through Labor Day weekend. The Cave of the Mounds is operated by two general managers and three supervisors. During peak season there are approximately fifteen tour operators. Yearly, the Cave of the Mounds is visited by approximately 75,000 visitors from all over the globe.

Every tour guide has many different ways of giving the same tour. At the Cave of the Mounds there are fifteen tour guides giving the same tour, these tour guides have many tour variations. Tour variations include school group tours, public tours with many children, and public tours consisting of adults. These tour variations allow for factual information on the tour to become misconstrued due to the number of variations given per peak season.

Currently, at the Cave of the Mounds new employee training consists of new tour guides reviewing the Cave of the Mounds Employee Guide book, and the fact book about cave formations. The new tour guides will then follow experienced tour guides on tours, about four times a day until they become familiar with the tour process, tour information, and learn the light mechanics. To facilitate these processes new guides will give fractional parts of the tour while being supervised by another tour guide.

To be able to give tours on one's own the new guide must lead a tour by oneself. The new guide must know all of the cave information and be able to work the lights



throughout the cave. A supervisor or general manager trails the tour to make sure it goes smoothly and is factual. If the supervisor feels the new guide has meet his/her requirements then the new guide has been certified as a tour guide, and is able to give tours on their own.

A large part of the training process is learning from more experienced tour guides. There is no written training evaluation protocol describing skills, knowledge, and abilities that all new tour guides should have upon successfully completing their tour certification. This is why a certification training evaluation program would be necessary to ensure all new tour guides are being certified with the same level of skills, knowledge, and abilities in regards to being able to conduct tours. Ongoing training throughout the summer is also needed to ensure all employees are aware of changes that are being made to the tour.

### *Statement of the Problem*

What employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training evaluation program for new tour guides?

### *Purpose of the Study*

The primary goal of this study is to develop a certification evaluation program for new tour guides which will increase tour uniformity and insure accurate and consistent information within a 1 hour time frame. This training program will also help tour guides develop group management skills. This program will eliminate inconsistencies and inaccuracies that would be given by new tour guides.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following terms will be used at least once throughout the study. The author presents a personalized definition along with a true definition from *Webster's Universal College Dictionary 1997*, unless otherwise noted.

#### *Coaching*

Coaching reinforces the idea that new employees should not be taken directly from training to their new positions to discover the ways of the working environment by themselves. Instead more experienced employees should share their accumulated knowledge with new employees (Kirkpatrick, 1983).

#### *Mentor*

A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.

#### *Tour Guide*

A tour guide is an employee at the Cave of the Mounds who conducts 1 hour informational tours through the Cave of the Mounds.

#### *Tourism*

Tourism is the occupation of providing information, accommodations, transportation and other services to tourists.

#### *Train*

To make proficient by instruction and practice, as in some art, profession, or work.

#### *Training*

The education, instruction, or discipline of a person or thing that is being trained.

### *Senior Tour Guide*

A senior tour guide is a tour guide who has worked at the Cave of the Mounds for a number of years and has numerous duties including: Conducting tours, selling tickets, managing dispatch/gift shop, and performing tasks for supervisors.

### *Limitations of the Study*

For the purpose of this study the limitations include, the survey was designed by the researcher and has not been proven a valid instrument to measure the perceptions of the study participants. The study has a limited sample size which includes all employees at the Cave of the Mounds who are certified tour guides; due to the small number of employees the results maybe restricted. There was no control over the reliability of the surveys completed by the new tour guides, returning tour guides, and supervisors of the Cave of the Mounds and the participants could have lied on their surveys. The respondents to the surveys may not have given answers that truly reflect their attitudes and thus results may have been biased.

### *Methodology*

The purpose of this study was to investigate what employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training program for new tour guides. The primary goal of this study was to develop a certification evaluation program for new tour guides which will increase tour uniformity and insure accurate and consistent information within a 1 hour time frame. This training program will also help tour guides

develop people management skills. This program will eliminate inconsistencies and inaccuracies that would be given by new tour guides.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in this study. Qualitative research focuses on proceedings that occur in natural settings, and studies those events in all their complexity. Qualitative researchers believe that the researcher's ability to read what he or she is seeing is crucial to understanding the events. (Leedy & Ormond 2001) Qualitative research is done through interviews and/or observations. Interviews can provide the researcher with a lot of useful information such as: facts, people's beliefs, feelings, motives, and present and past behaviors (Silverman, 1993).

In this study a survey was developed using a Likert type scale and included some open-ended questions. The survey asked participants their opinions regarding their overall perceptions about the training they received as a new tour guide at the Cave of the Mounds. As a tour guide I also filled out the survey and my responses are encompassed in the data. All questions were designed to illicit the honest responses of the subjects. Data was collected from a thirty-two question survey. The data analyzed the amount of time guides spend looking at training resources, resources most beneficial and least beneficial to training, parts of the tour most difficult to learn, which groups of people tend to be the most difficult and least difficult to manage on a tour, how clear the tour certification will be, and any patterns and similarities that may stand out. After each category was analyzed separately the researcher combined all data to further explore. The results of the data were illustrated graphically please see appendix A.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### *Training in the Tourism Industry*

Training in the tourism industry should be considered an essential part of an organization. Training can mean the difference between success and failure in the industry. The way an employee performs his job is just as important as the outcome, especially if an organization is looking to reduce variation in the delivery of its service package. Often this is a high priority for many leisure and tourism organizations.

(Bushwell and Williams, 2003)

Training should be attitudinal, technical, and perpetual. Examples of training programs in the tourism industry that create a productive workforce, improve quality and generate loyalty include pre-leadership training programs and training programs that bring employees together to sharpen their skills and share ideas. These training programs are most successful when accompanied by a comprehensive manual that describes operational standards and procedures, especially if the handbook documents organizational and employee successes throughout the organizations' existence.

(McFerrin- Peters & Rosenbluth, 2002)

In the tourism industry it is important to provide coaching for all employees. It is even more vital for new employees. Coaching reinforces the idea that new employees should not be taken directly from training to their new positions to discover the ways of the working environment by themselves. Instead more experienced employees should share their accumulated knowledge with new employees. A coach should be an employee who sets an example by attitudes and personal behavior on the job (Kirkpatrick, 1983). It is recommended that new employee training begin with rational

and technical training followed by on-the-job-training in a controlled environment facilitated by experienced coaches. Many new employees learn by modeling and through experience so organizations need to ensure that these illustrations and experiences are ones that they want to reinforce. (McFerrin- Peters & Rosenbluth, 2002)

### *Service Quality in the Tourism Industry*

J.M. Juran (1999) developed a ten step universal quality processes which can be applied to both goods and services called Fitness for Use. This idea incorporates the concept that consumers of the product or service determine how beneficial the goods or services are to them. This approach is applicable to the tourism and leisure industry, as many experiences are marketed on the basis of the benefits they will provide for customers. Juran's ten step service quality improvement process consists of the following steps: 1. Build awareness of the need and opportunity for improvement, 2. set goals for improvement, 3. organize to reach the goals, 4. provide training, 5. carry out projects to solve problems, 6. report progress, 7. give recognition, 8. communicate results, 9. keep the score, and 10. maintain momentum by making annual improvement part of the regular system processes of the company. (Godfrey & Juran, 1999)

Clear communication and staff empowerment can take an organization only so far. The ability of the staff to respond and to perform appropriately is crucial. In addition, education and training are key factors in service quality and achieving culture change. (Bushwell & Williams, 2003)

### *Methods for New Employee Orientation Programs*

One challenge managers face in all organizations is successfully orienting new employees into the company to reduce turnover and maintain an interdependent working environment. In today's society Americans will on average change jobs 10 times between the ages of 18 and 37. This will increase the need for successful new employee orientation programs in the workforce (Rollag & Salvatore, 2005).

There are three challenges to successfully training new employees. The first challenge is jump-starting new employee productivity. New employees typically drain organizational productivity, salary, training, orientation expenses, and consume co-workers' time without providing much in return. The second challenge is tapping into the creativity of new hires. New employees represent new ideas, perspectives, expertise and industry contacts that an organization can leverage to become more innovative and competitive. The third and final challenge is keeping new employees in the company long enough to justify new employee orientation and training programs. According to a survey by Mercer Inc., 45% of companies estimate the turnover costs to replace and train a lost employee at more than \$10,000 (Rollag & Salvatore, 2005).

According to Starcke (1996) there are some key questions employers should ask themselves when developing or recreating a new employee orientation program.

Examples of these questions are:

1. What impression and impact would I want to make on new employees the first day?
2. What key policies and procedures must employees be aware of the first day to avoid mistakes on the second day?

3. What specific things can I do to ensure that new employees will begin to know their co-workers without feeling overwhelmed?
4. What special things (desk, work area, equipment, and special instructions) can I provide to make new workers feel comfortable, welcome and secure?
5. What positive experience can I provide for new employees that they could discuss with their families?
6. How can I, as the supervisor, ensure that I will be available to new employees on the first day to provide personal attention and to convey a clear message that they are important additions to the work team? (Starcke, 1996)

Most companies orientate new hires by using an informational approach which provides new employees with a large amount of information about company routines and technologies (Rollag & Salvatore, 2005). The expectation is that newcomers have the background, skills and cognitive ability to filter, comprehend and internalize the information as needed to complete their initial tasks. Examples of ways organizations use this technique to orientate new employees are through formal training or on-the-job experiences with the expectation that information and awareness about organizational resources will allow newcomers to seek out and obtain what they need to be productive in the organization. (Rollag & Salvatore, 2005)

According to Hickman and Roderer (2000) there are certain objectives that should be met in all new employee orientation programs. They include:

1. New employees should be made to feel welcomed.



2. New employees should understand the organization in a broad sense (its past, present, and vision for the future) as well as specifics in key areas (its structure, culture, policies, and procedures).
3. New employees should be clear about what is expected in terms of work, behavior, and job skills.

According to Hickman and Roderer (2000) “the first day of training is very important because, if facilitated correctly new employees can acquire a greater understanding of the organization.” This usually occurs through a group orientation presentation. The group orientation process should reinforce the employee’s employment decision. Introductions should be made throughout the organization to people who will support new employees during the orientation process. Examples of those who should be introduced are the new employees’ supervisor, a peer advisor or mentor, and other co-workers.

The Fairmont Hotel’s new employee orientation program includes a process where new employees are paired with a mentor of their choosing as a way to receive extra help with job duties, tasks, and to build relationships with co-workers (Schetter, 2002). Supervisors are also included in the program to help new employees identify goals (Schetter, 2002).

It is recommended that new employees be given resources and references to facilitate the orientation process so newcomers can share in the responsibility of learning about their respective job duties and tasks. This can be accomplished by offering self-study materials, training, observation, and participation in coaching or mentoring opportunities (Hickman & Roderer, 2000). An example of a successful new orientation

program is one in which new employees carry a comprehensive employee check list that includes all of the areas that must be covered to introduce the new employee to the organization (Hickman & Roderer, 2000).

### *Training Program Evaluation*

According to Sam McClelland (1994) one of the most overlooked aspects in training is the evaluation phase. McClelland also believes that often the value of conducting training is overshadowed by the necessity to gain participants' or students' immediate post course reaction. These reactions sometimes can be mistakenly used to judge whether or not the training program was effective.

In the article "What Should Training Evaluations Evaluate?" Sandi Mann (1996) considers an evaluation effective when it:

is aimed at important and worthwhile organizational benefits; operates smoothly and effectively and is enjoyed by participants; achieves important skills, knowledge and attitude objectives; uses the best available and most cost-effective designs; is used effectively on the job; and provides valuable and cost-effective organizational benefits.

Many facilitators use standardized evaluation tools due to budgetary restraints. There are advantages and disadvantages when using these instruments. The advantages include:

1. The evaluation tools are validated in that they have been used and refined over time, therefore, the data and feedback they provide are, likewise, valid.

2. The evaluation tools can be “customized”, to the extent that many contain questions employing an “open format”, allowing the course designer some flexibility of “inserting” course-specific queries.
3. The evaluation tools are relatively inexpensive and readily available, thereby allowing the instructional designer to focus mainly on course and curriculum development.

Disadvantages of using commercially standardized evaluation tools include:

1. The evaluation tools present a “one size fits all” approach to training course design; in fact they assume that each course has relative similarities in its content, style, and expectations.
2. The evaluation tools are generally not as comprehensive nor focused on critical content (objective-driven) areas as would be necessary or desirable.
3. The evaluation tools offer little assistance in assessing the longer-term effects of the training – in essence, the pay-off in determining a course’s overall usefulness and cost effectiveness. (McClelland, 1994)

An alternative to commercially produced evaluation tools is designing a customized evaluation tool which will obtain feedback from specific objectives relating to the training at hand. The feedback will determine how the course was primarily received and whether the training had the desired impact on the trainees. (McClelland, 1994)

According to McClelland (1994) the purpose of training evaluations is to get direct feedback from participants of the program. This includes feedback on how well the instructor facilitated the training program, how relevant the material was to the

trainees' job, and how well the training program was organized. Training evaluations should ultimately measure trainee's long-term changes in learning and/or behavior. To measure this type of change the evaluation should ask the following questions:

1. What changes are necessary to make the course more focused and/or relevant?
2. How well does the course address its stated objectives?
3. What actions and/or results are further anticipated and/or expected of participants?
4. What observable or otherwise measurable increases in knowledge or skills have been obtained?
5. What positive effect has the training had on organizational efficiency and productivity, and can any changes incurred be attributed directly to the implementation of the training and not just to occurrence by accident or coincidence? (McClelland, 1994)

In the article "Evaluation that Goes the Distance," Paul Bernthal (1995) believes that training evaluations should assess more than behavior, learning, reactions and results. Bernthal believes that there are additional areas that can be evaluated. These areas include: the quality, delivery, or retention of the training program; how well the training cut deficiencies in a particular group; the usefulness of parallel training for managers and staffs; and variables in the work environment that discourage or improve the effect of training.

The basis for course evaluation methods begins with determining why the training is necessary (McClelland, 1994). Phillips (1992) developed a Traditional Curriculum Design Model. The first step in the model is to assess training needs. To do this Phillips

suggests establishing a core set of organizational and/or training requirements and then ranking and prioritizing the training requirements in order of importance, which will serve two purposes:

1. It focuses attention on functional and/or behavioral areas where skills will need to be developed and/or enhanced.
2. It can be used as an indicator of what skills, knowledge, or type of intervention will be needed in the future for the organization to implement its competitive business strategy successfully. (Phillips, 1992)

Additional steps in the Traditional Curriculum Design Model are: 2. develop training course objectives, 3. design course curriculum, 4. design an evaluation process to address objectives and 5. course curriculum, present the course, and evaluate the process. Any discrepancies between the ideal and actual outcome of the training reflect back on the assessment process where the basis for the training were first identified. (Phillips, 1992)

According to McClelland (1994), management tends to question the effectiveness of a training program when evaluations come back with good results at the conclusion of the program yet, the training doesn't meet its defined objectives. By using a systematic approach to the design, development, administration, and analysis of training evaluations, a facilitator can receive real indicators of improvements needed in the design process to produce more effective training. This will provide a positive return on investment in regards to the training program.

### *Evaluation Feedback Methods*

There are different types of evaluative feedback. One is immediate post-course feedback. The information is composed of questions written to reflect the stated short-term training objectives. It should be both qualitatively and quantitatively orientated. A list of the course's objectives is included on the evaluation instrument. Qualitative responses utilize an open-ended answer format that includes responding to course content, practicality, usefulness on the job, comfort levels, and instructional material worth. Quantitative statements ask participants to rate their responses using a Likert scale type format. (McClelland, 1994)

Questions should be formed to stimulate thinking and allow for candid responses. These qualitative questions should relate to the defined training goals and should be assigned a significance factor of "1" or "2." One represents the priority in relation to course objectives. Two indicates a lesser degree of importance. Negative scores receive a zero. This information is important to the training program facilitator because it helps the facilitator understand trainees' relations and can provide insights into course content, arrangement, and logistics. (McClelland, 1994)

Another type of evaluation feedback is long-term feedback. This feedback is usually conducted at predetermined intervals after the course has ended. This can occur through survey questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Usually on-site observations work best for long-term data collection. These observations require a subject-matter expert to unobtrusively observe the behavior and skill/knowledge acquisition of employees in the workplace. This expert should be familiar with the work environment and behaviors being observed. (McClelland, 1994)

### *Data Collection*

Bernthal (1995) recommends collecting data from a variety of sources. The sample should be randomly selected from the population that is being evaluated. He also suggests that if the population is fairly homogenous, fewer people will be included in the sample. However, the sample should always be representative of the entire target population.

According to McClelland (1994) data from long term evaluations should be collected and compared with the training programs objectives and pre-course standards. This process will allow the evaluator to identify any discrepancies.

Qualitative research approaches have two things in common: 1. they focus on events that occur in natural settings, and 2. they involve studying those events in all their intricacy. These researchers don't try to simplify what they are observing, instead they realize that the events have many proportions and therefore need to depict the issue in its multifaceted structure. Qualitative researchers believe that the researcher's ability to read what he or she is seeing is crucial to understanding the events. (Leedy & Ormond 2001)

Collecting data in qualitative research is done through interviews and/or observations. Interviews can provide the researcher with a lot of useful information such as: facts, people's beliefs, feelings, motives, and present and past behaviors (Silverman, 1993). In the case of observing the researcher may either be a relative outsider or as a participant observer. An advantage of observation is that it allows the researcher to be very flexible. A disadvantage is that the researcher can easily shift their focal point as new data is discovered. (Leedy & Ormond 2001)

### *Summary*

The review of literature indicates that training is an essential part of all organizations in the tourism industry. Training will reduce variation in the delivery of services which is a high priority for companies in this industry. To improve quality and create an interdependent work environment training should be attitudinal, technical, and on-going.

It is also clear from research that new employee orientation programs are most successful when they include an employee handbook, an informational group orientation, and on-the-job training. After the training program has ended new employees should be paired with a mentor or coach who will offer assistance when necessary.

The research from several sources indicates that training program evaluations are often overlooked, yet are extremely important. The purpose of these evaluations is to get feedback from the training program participants. The feedback should include how well the instructor facilitated the program; how relevant the material was to the trainee's job, and how well the training program was organized. Data should be collected from all who participated in the course and the information should be compared with the programs' objectives to see if they were met. The purpose of this study was to investigate what employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification (training) evaluation program for new tour guides



### Chapter III: Methodology

#### *The Research Question*

The purpose of this study was to investigate what employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training evaluation program for new tour guides. The researcher designed all statements for the survey and devised all criteria for the Likert-type scales. A list was generated by the researcher that included all new tour guides, returning tour guides, and supervisors. The survey items consisted of a Likert-type scale with statements designed to assess the attitudes toward the current new employee training program. There were additional open ended questions designed to assess tour guide's opinions and views of ways to improve the current training program.

#### *Introduction to Quantitative Research*

Quantitative research involves “identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).” Quantitative research or descriptive research examines a situation as it is. There are four main types of quantitative research approaches: Correlation research, developmental designs, observation studies, and survey research.

A correlation study examines the extent to which differences in one variable are related to differences in one or more other variables. A correlation exists, if when one variable increases, another variable increases or decreases in a somewhat predictable manner. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001)

A developmental design study examines how a particular characteristic changes as people grow older. There are two types of developmental designs: Cross-sectional

study and longitudinal study. In a cross-sectional study participants from several different age groups are sampled and compared. In a longitudinal study a single group of participants is followed over the course of several months or years, and data related to the characteristics under examination are collected at predetermined times. (Gay, 1996)

The objective of an observation study is to monitor how participants spend their time; usually the focus of the research is on a particular behavior or occurrence of behavior. The research must be as objective as possible while examining participant's activities. Most often the frequency of the behavior is quantified. The behavior can also be counted and rated for accuracy, intensity, and maturity. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001)

Survey research “captures a fleeting moment time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).” This research method usually includes a survey. A survey is quite simple in design the researcher poses a series of questions to study participants, summarizes their responses with percentages, frequency and then draws inferences from the responses of the sample. (Babbie, 1990)

### *Introduction to Qualitative Research*

“In determining a research method best suited for the problem stated earlier it is necessary to determine the best format for obtaining quality and factual data from which conclusions could be drawn (Fenton, 1999).” Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting most often the researcher goes to the site of the participant to conduct the research, in order to develop a level of detail about the individual or place and to be involved in experiences of the participants. Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic and researchers seek participation of study

participants. Qualitative data is essentially interpretive, meaning the researcher makes an interpretation of the data. This includes “developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning personally and theoretically (Rossman and Rallis, 1998).”

Qualitative research often takes place in a natural setting, where the researcher will travel to the research site. This allows the researcher to become highly involved in the actual experiences of the participants and the researcher is able to identify particulars of the study site. “Qualitative researchers look for involvement of their participants in data collection and seek to build rapport and credibility with the individuals in the study (Rossman and Rallis, 1998).” Qualitative researchers do not disturb the research site any more than necessary while conducting their study. Examples of qualitative data collection methods include traditional based on open-ended observation, interviews, and documents.

Data gathered from qualitative methods are descriptive in nature. Data are reported in words, most often the participant’s words, rather than numbers. The focus of qualitative research is on participants’ perceptions and experiences. This research method focuses on the process that is occurring as well as the product or outcome. Researchers are particularly interested in understanding how things occur. (Creswell, 2003)

Objectivity and truthfulness are critical to both research traditions. However, the criterion for judging a qualitative study differs from a quantitative study. First and foremost, the researcher seeks believability, based on consistency, insight and influential

utility through a process of verification rather than through traditional validity and reliability measures. (Creswell, 2003)

### *Subject Selection and Description*

Every tour guide and supervisor employed by the Cave of the Mounds, who conducts tours was a potential survey participant. Surveys were distributed to participants with their paychecks. Included in the survey instructions was a clause stating that participation was strictly voluntary.

### *Instrumentation*

Subjects were asked to complete a thirty-two question Likert-type scale survey that included two open-ended questions. The survey asked participants opinions regarding their overall perceptions about the training they received as a new tour guide at the Cave of the Mounds. All questions were designed to illicit the honest responses of the subjects.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

Surveys were distributed to participants with their paychecks in a sealed unmarked envelope which contained a survey and an unmarked return envelope. Completed surveys were placed in a box next to the time clock to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

*Data Analysis*

The data will analyze the amount of time guides spend looking at training resources, resources most beneficial and least beneficial to training, parts of the tour most difficult to learn, which groups of people that tend to be the most difficult and least difficult to manage on a tour, how clear the tour certification is, and any patterns and similarities that may stand out. After each category is analyzed separately the researcher will combine all data to further explore. The results of the data will be illustrated graphically.

## Chapter IV: Results

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to investigate what employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training evaluation program for new tour guides. Questions on the New Employee Survey (Appendix A) examined the overall perceptions about the new employee training tour guides received as new tour guides at the Cave of the Mounds. The researcher designed all statements for surveys and devised all criteria for the Likert-type scales. The survey items consisted of a Likert-type scale with statements designed to assess the attitudes toward the current new employee training program. Participants were asked to circle the answer which best indicated their response. If a statement did not apply, participants were instructed to circle neutral. There were additional open-ended questions at the end of the survey which allowed participants to add additional comments about the current training program. The final sample, which was the entire population surveyed, comprised of thirteen tour guides, four senior guides, and three supervisors. As a employee at the Cave of the Mounds the researcher took part in the study.

### *New Employee Training Survey Results*

The specific research questions under study were as follows:

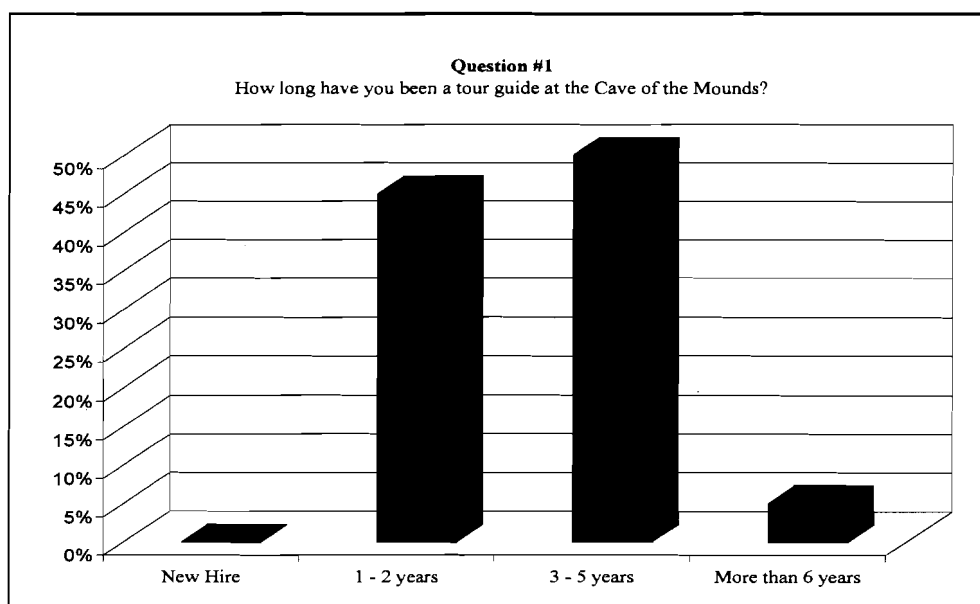
1. How long did it take you to become certified tour guide?
2. What was your primary source for learning the tour?
3. When learning the tour what did you have the most difficulty with?

4. When learning how to manage school tour groups which age group is the most difficult to manage?
5. When learning how to manage general public tours, which tour group is the most difficult to learn how to manage?
6. How confident are you that the tour you give is based on factual geological information?
7. Overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give accurate, factual, 1 hour tours.

*How Long have you Been a Tour Guide at the Cave of the Mounds?*

Five percent or 1 participant has been a tour guide at the Cave of the Mounds for more than five years (Question #1). Fifty percent or 10 participants have worked at the Cave of the Mounds for three to five years and 45 percent or 9 participants have worked at the Cave of the Mounds for one to two years. (Figure 1a)

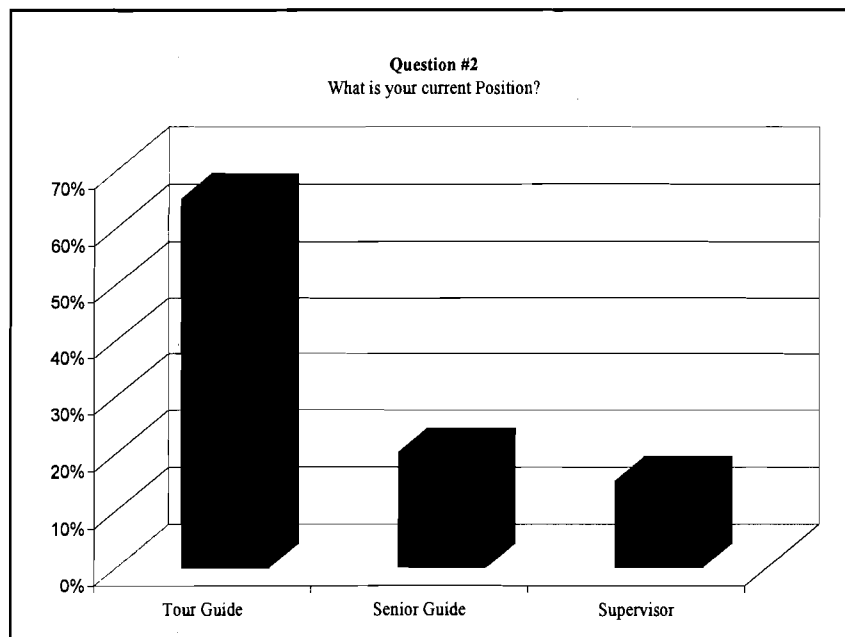
**Figure 1a: Question 1**



*What is your Current Position?*

In response to question #2 (figure 2a) 13 or 60% of participants who partook in the survey were tour guides, 4 or 20% of participants were senior guides, and 3 or 20% were supervisors.

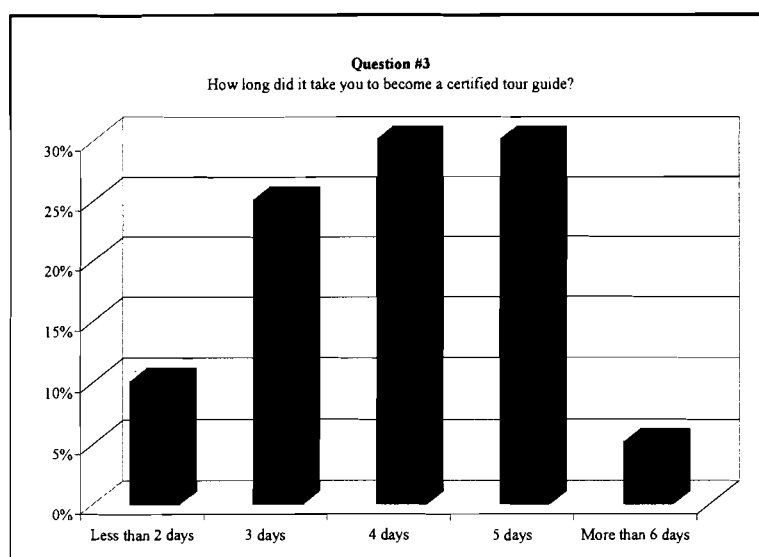
**Figure 2a: Question 2**



*How Long Did it Take you to Become a Certified Tour Guide?*

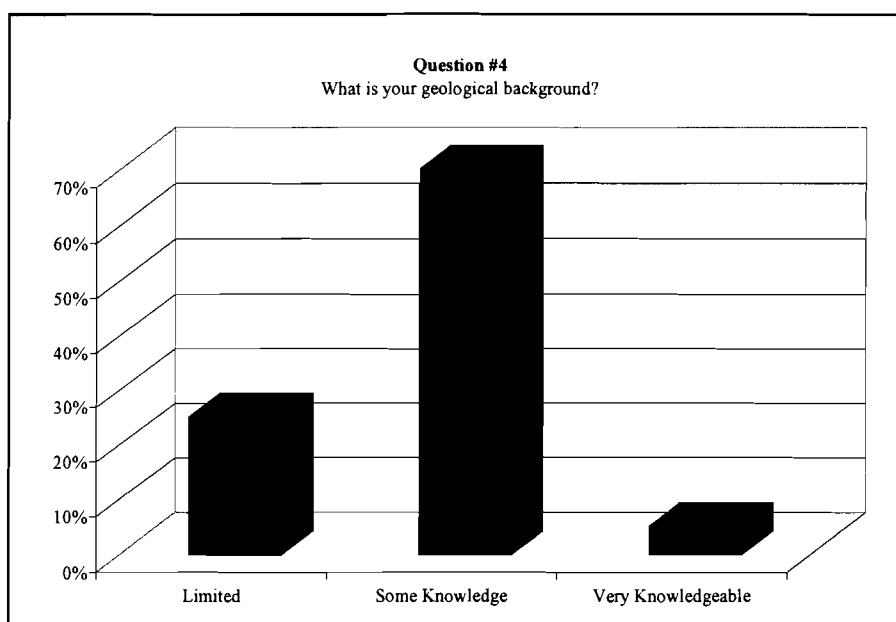
Regarding question #3 (figure 3a) it took four or five days for 12 or 60% of participants to become certified tour guides. Twenty-five percent or 3 participants became certified tour guides within three days. Two or 10% of participants became certified tour guides in less than two days. It took 1 guide more than six days to become a certified tour guide.



**Figure 3a: Question 3**

*What is your Geological Background?*

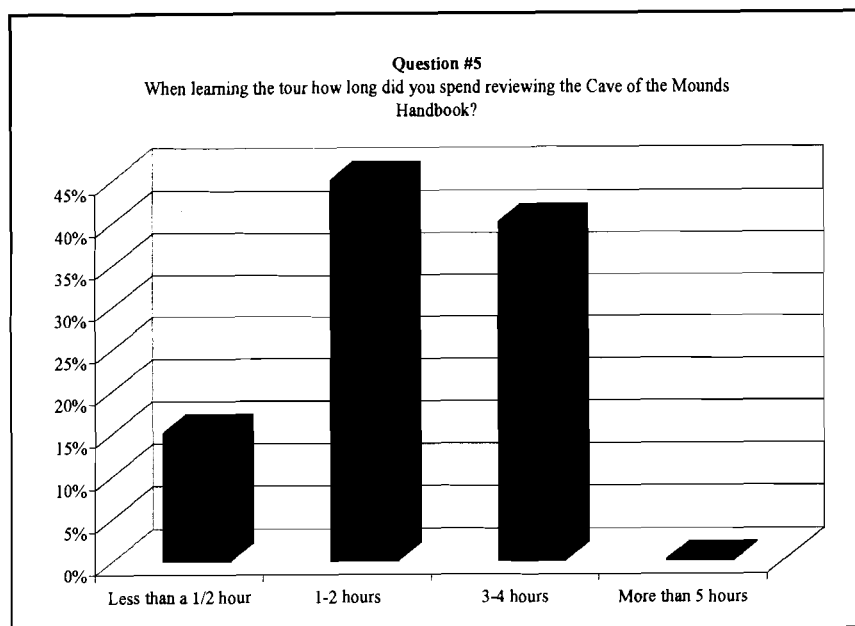
In regard to question #4 (figure 4a) 70 percent or 14 tour guides had some knowledge about geology. Twenty-five percent or 5 tour guides had a limited geological background and 5 percent or 1 tour guide identified themselves as very knowledgeable.

**Figure 4a: Question 4**

*When Learning the Tour How Long Did you Spend Reviewing the Cave of the Mounds Handbook?*

In response to question #5 (figure 5a) 45% or 9 respondents spent 1 to 2 hours reviewing the Cave of the Mounds Handbook. Forty percent or 8 respondents spent 3 to 4 hours reviewing the Handbook. Fifteen percent or 3 respondents spent less than a ½ hour reviewing the Handbook. None of the respondents reported spending more than five hours reviewing the Cave of the Mounds Handbook

**Figure 5a: Question 5**

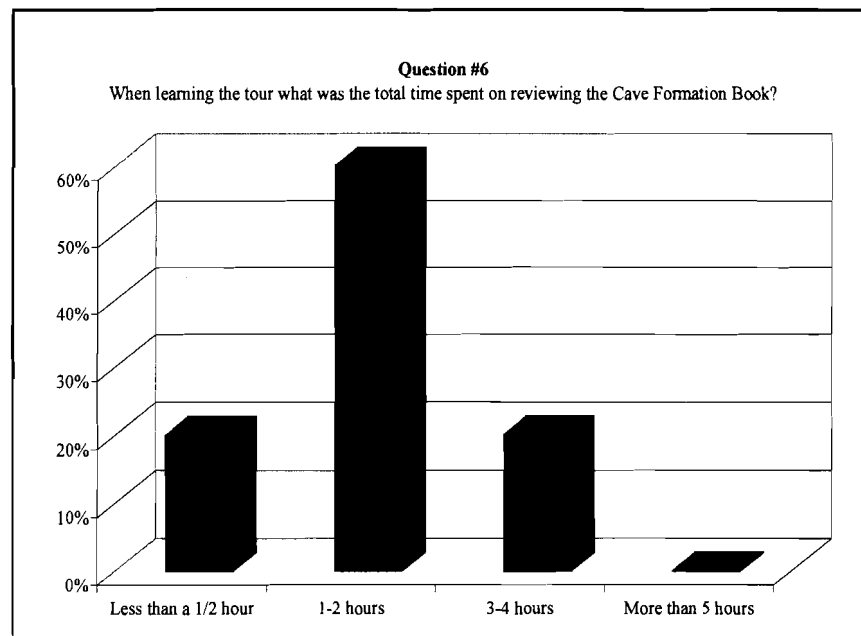


*When Learning the Tour What was the Total Time Spent on Reviewing the Cave Formation Book?*

Regarding question #6, 20% percent or 4 tour guides spent less than a ½ hour reviewing the Cave Formation Book. Sixty percent or 12 tour guides spent 1 to 2 hours reviewing the Cave Formation Book. Twenty percent or 4 tour guides spent 3 to 4 hours

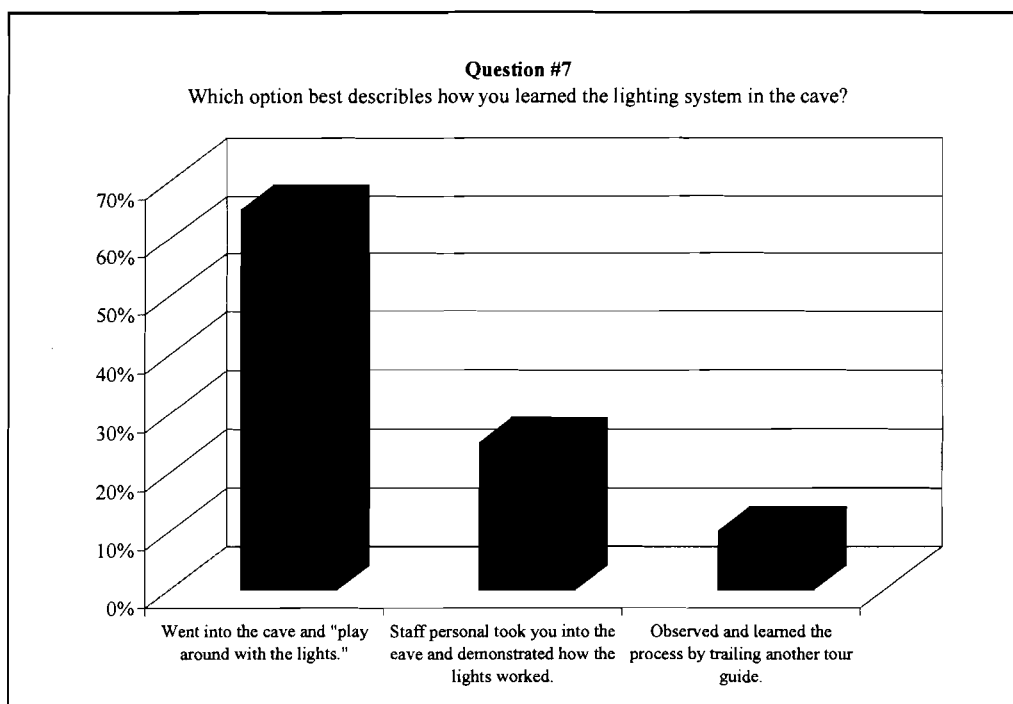
reviewing the Cave Formation Book. None of the respondents reported spending more than 5 hours reviewing the Cave Formation Book. (Figure 6a)

**Figure 6a: Question 6**



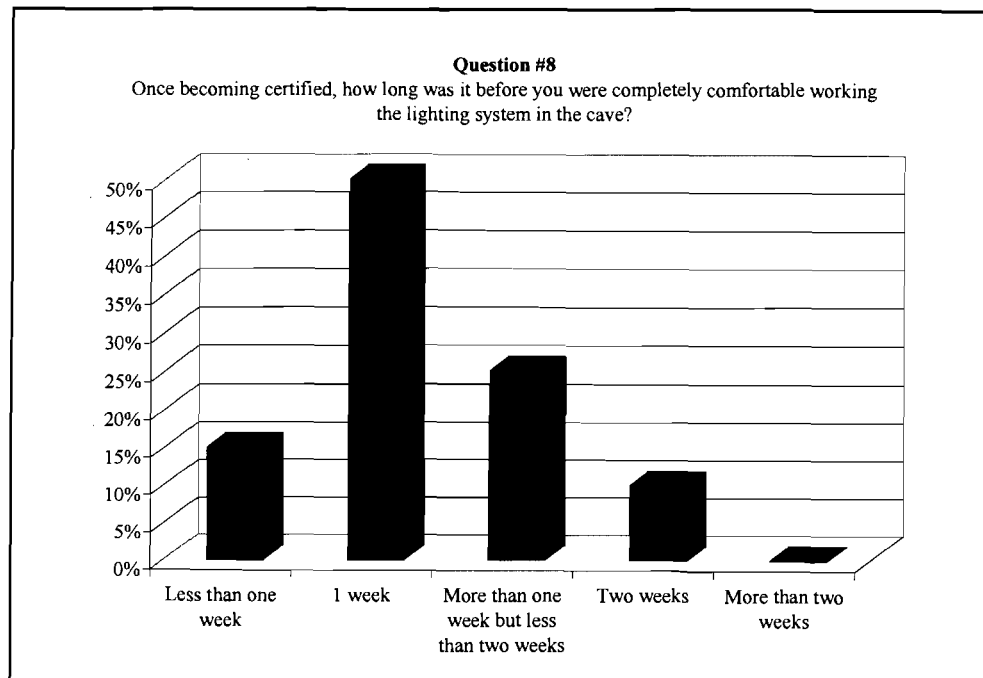
*Which Option Best Describes how you Learned the Lighting System in the Cave?*

In reply to question #7 (figure 7a) 70% or 13 participants responded that to learn the lighting system in the cave they went into the cave and “played around with the lights.” Twenty percent or 5 participants reported that to learn the lighting system staff personal took them into the cave and demonstrated how the lights worked. Ten percent or 2 participants learned the lighting system by observing and learning the process by trailing another tour guide.

**Figure 7a: Question 7**

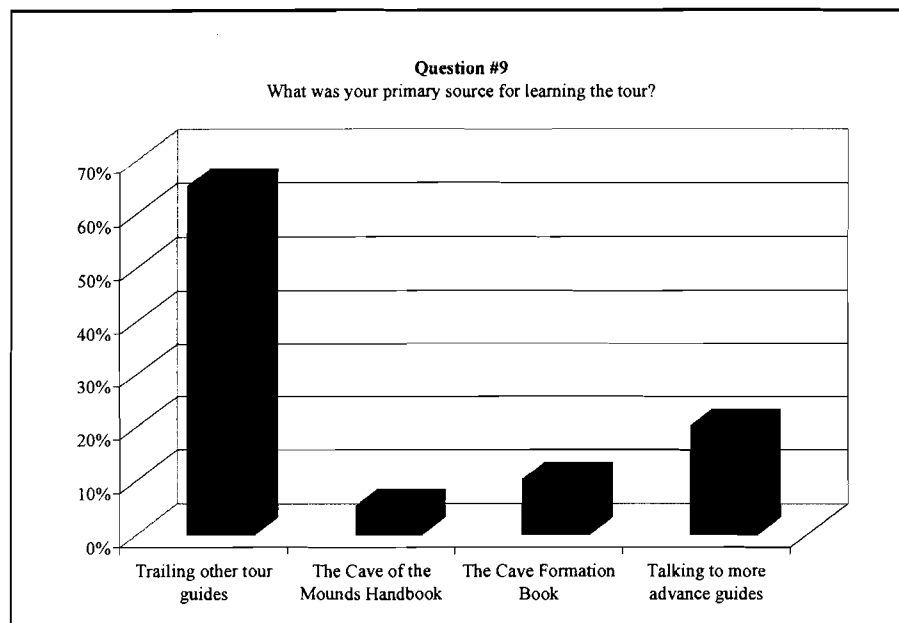
*Once Becoming Certified, How Long was it Before you were Completely Comfortable  
Working the Lighting System in the Cave?*

Regarding question #8 (figure 8a) 5 or 15% of tour guides reported that they felt comfortable working the lighting system in the cave in less than one week. Ten or 50% of respondents reported feeling comfortable working the lighting system in the cave in 1 week. Five or 25% of those surveyed reported feeling comfortable working the lighting system in more than 1 week but less than 2 weeks. Two or 10% of tour guides felt comfortable working the lighting system within 2 weeks of learning it. None of the respondents reported that it took them more than 2 weeks to learn the lighting system.

**Figure 8a: Question 8**

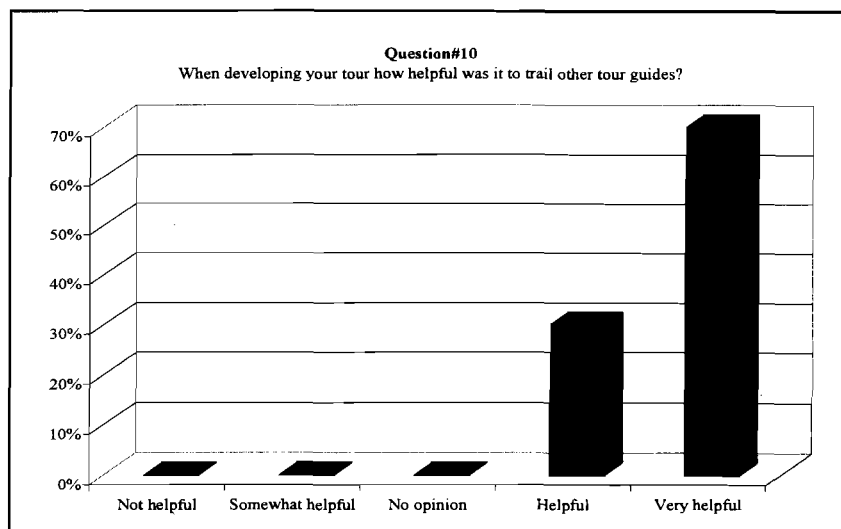
*What was your Primary Source for Learning the Tour?*

In response to question #9 (figure 9a) 65% or 13 survey participants agreed that trailing other tour guides was their primary source for learning the tour. Five percent or 1 survey participant responded that the Cave of the Mounds Handbook was his/her primary source for learning the tour. Ten percent or 2 respondents identified that the Cave Formation Book was their primary source in learning the tour. Twenty percent or 4 respondents reported that talking to more advanced guide was their primary source for learning the tour.

**Figure 9a: Question 9**

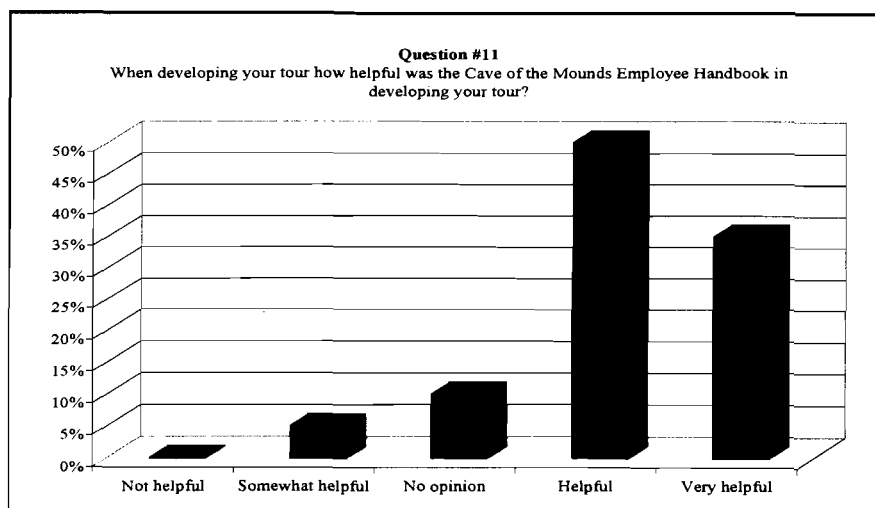
*When Developing your Tour How Helpful was it to Trail Other Tour Guides?*

In response to question #10 (figure 10a) none of the respondents reported that it was not helpful, somewhat helpful, or had no opinion about how helpful it was to trail other tour guides when developing their tour. Thirty percent or 6 respondents reported that it was helpful to trail other tour guides when developing their tour. Seventy percent or 14 respondents reported that it is very helpful to trail other guides while developing their own tour. The data seem to suggest that 100% of respondents found it either helpful or very helpful to trail other tour guides when developing their tour.

**Figure 10a: Question 10**

*When Developing your Tour How Helpful Was the Cave of the Mounds Employee Handbook in Developing your Tour?*

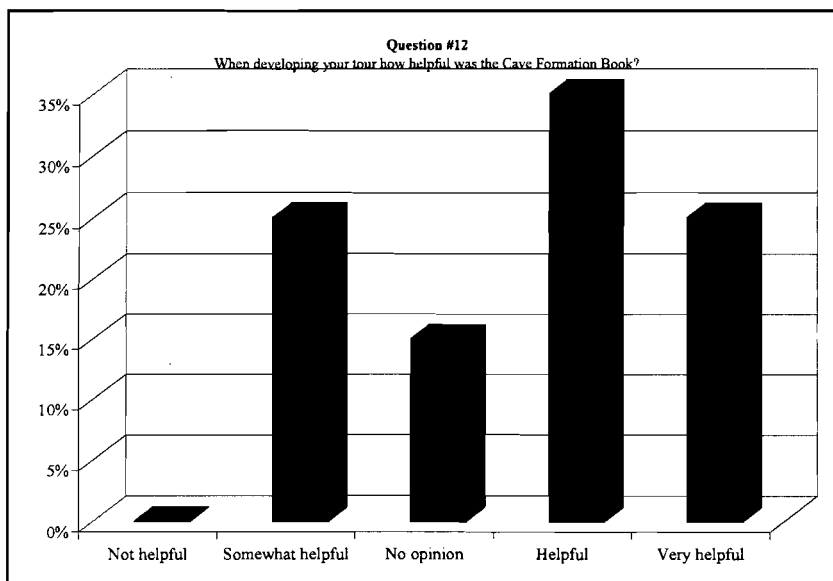
Regarding to question #11 (figure 11a) none of the survey participants reported that the Cave of the Mounds Employee Handbook was not helpful. One or 5% found the Employee Handbook somewhat helpful. Two or 10% of participants had no opinion on the Employee Handbook. Ten or 50% of respondents reported that the Handbook was helpful. Seven or 35% of the participants agreed that the Handbook was very helpful.

**Figure 11a: Question 11**

*When Developing your Tour How Helpful Was the Cave Formation Book?*

In regards to question #12 (figure 12a) none of the respondents reported that the Cave Formation Book was not helpful. Twenty-five percent or 5 respondents reported that the Cave Formation Book was somewhat helpful. Fifteen percent or 3 respondents reported that they had no opinion about the helpfulness of the Cave Formation Book. Thirty-five percent or 7 survey participants reported that the Cave Formation Book was helpful. Twenty-five percent or 5 participants reported that the Cave Formation Book was very helpful.

**Figure 12a: Question 12**



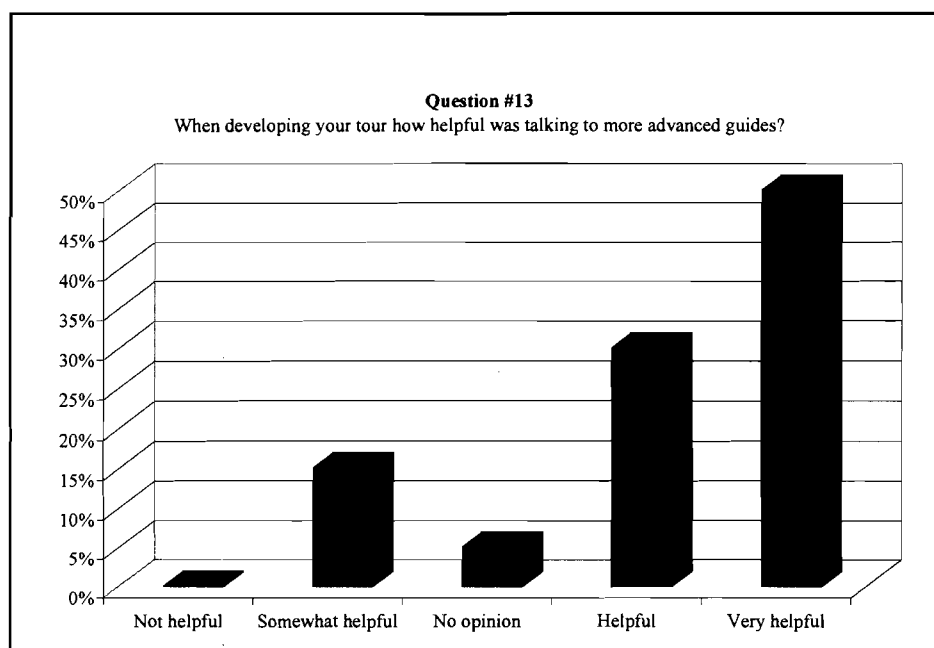
*When Developing your Tour How Helpful Was Talking to More Advanced Guides?*

Regarding question #13 (figure 13a) none of the respondents reported that talking to more advanced guides was not helpful when developing their tour. Three or 15% of tour guides reported that talking to more advanced guides was somewhat helpful when developing their tour. One or 5% of tour guides reported having no opinion on how advanced guides helped them develop their tour. Six or 30% of tour guides found it



helpful to talk to more advanced guides when developing their tour. Ten or 50% of those surveyed reported that it was very helpful to talk to more advanced guides while developing their tour.

**Figure 13a: Question 13**

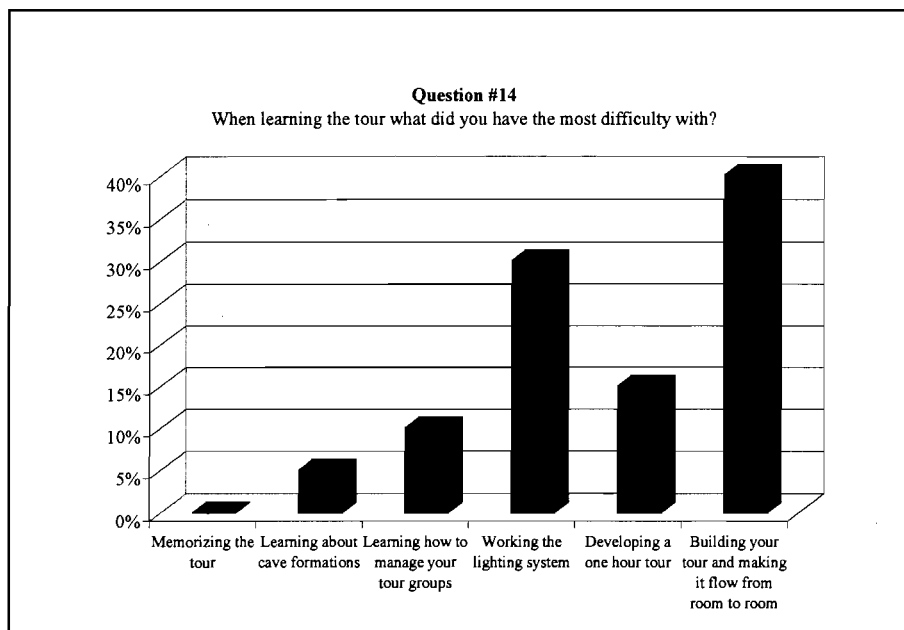


*When Learning the Tour What Did you Have the Most Difficulty With?*

When learning the tour none of the tour guides reported that memorizing the tour caused them the most difficulty (question #14). Five percent or 1 tour guide reported that when learning the tour he/she had the most difficulty with learning about the cave formations. Ten percent or 2 respondents reported having the most difficulty learning how to manage their tour groups. Thirty percent or 6 respondents reported having the most difficulty learning how to work the lighting system. Fifteen percent or 3 survey participants reported that they had the most difficulty developing a 1 hour tour. Forty percent or 8 respondents reported that they had the most difficulty building their tour and making it flow from room to room. Data seem to suggest that tour guides found it most

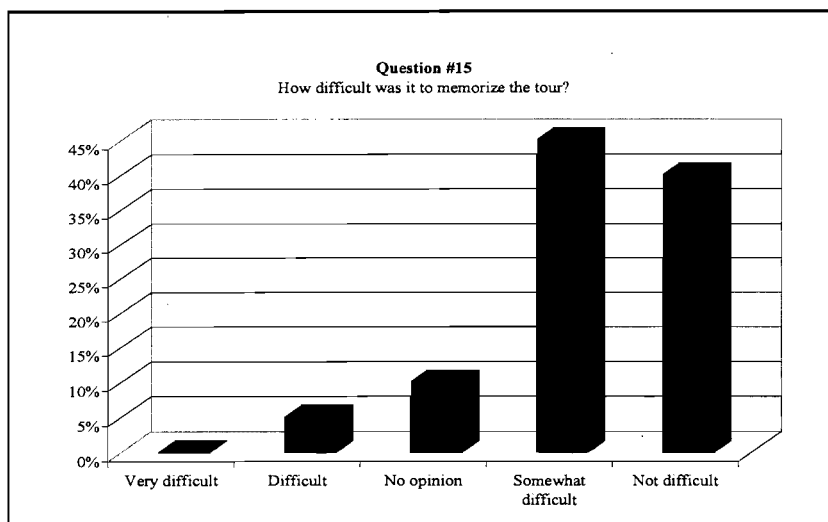
difficult to build your tour and make it flow from room to room; working the lighting system also seemed to be a difficult task when learning the tour for most guides. Please see figure 14a.

**Figure 14a: Question 14**



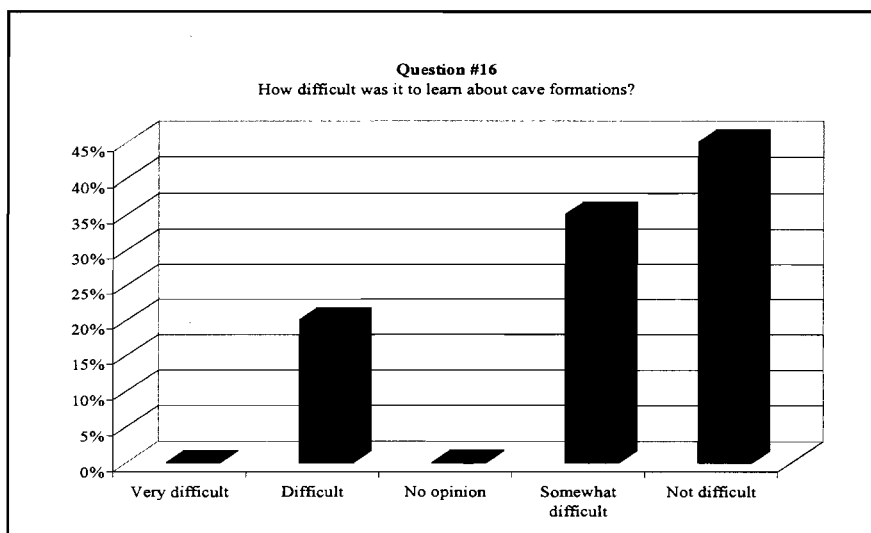
### *How difficult was it to Memorize the Tour?*

In response to question #15 (figure 15a) none of the participants reported it very difficult to memorize the tour. Five percent or 1 participant found it difficult to memorize the tour. Ten percent or 2 participants did not have an opinion as to the difficulty of memorizing the tour. Forty-five percent or 9 participants found it somewhat difficult to memorize the tour. Forty percent or 8 participants did not have difficulty memorizing the tour.

**Figure 15a: Question 15**

*How difficult was it to Learn About Cave Formations?*

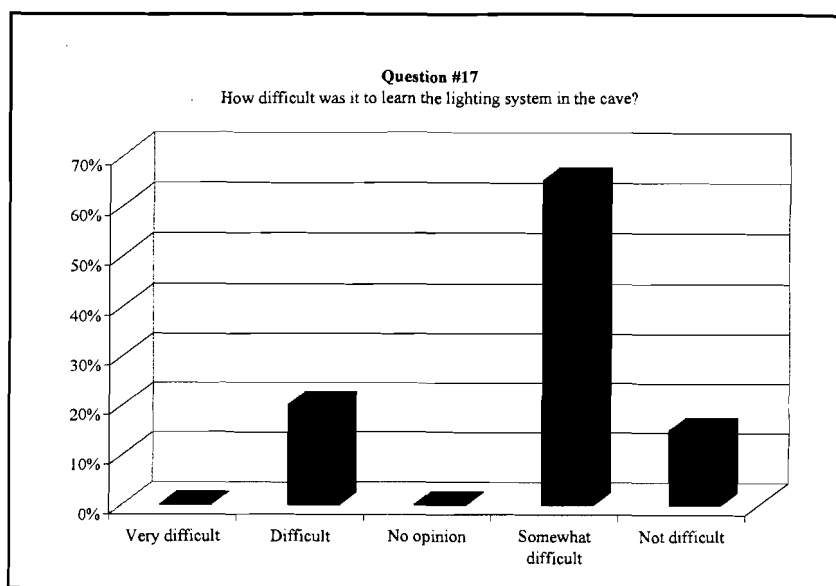
None of the survey participants found it very difficult to learn about cave formations (question #16). Four participants or 20% found it difficult to learn about cave formations. None of the participants had no opinion about learning about cave formations. Seven or 35% of participants found it somewhat difficult to learn about cave formations. Nine or 45% of participants did not find it difficult when learning about cave formations. Please see figure 16a.

**Figure 16a: Question 16**

*How difficult was it to Learn the Lighting System in the Cave?*

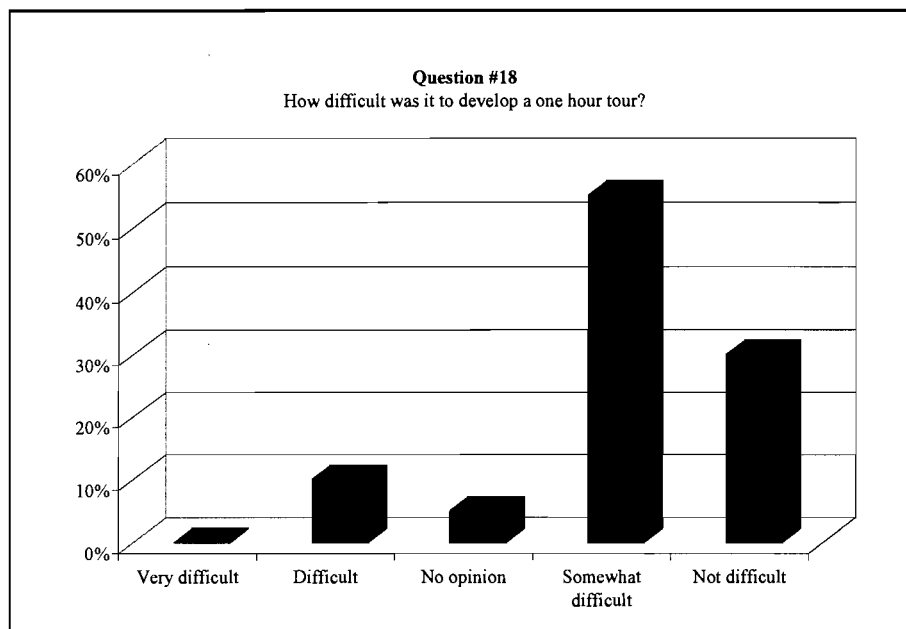
None of the survey respondents found it very difficult to learn the lighting system in the cave (question #17). Twenty percent or 4 respondents found it difficult to learn the lighting system. None of the survey respondents reported having no opinion about learning the lighting system. Sixty-five percent or 13 respondents reported that it was somewhat difficult to learn the lighting system. Fifteen or 3 respondents reported that it was not difficult to learn the lighting system in the cave. Please see figure 17a.

**Figure 17a: Question 17**



*How difficult was it to Develop a 1 hour Tour?*

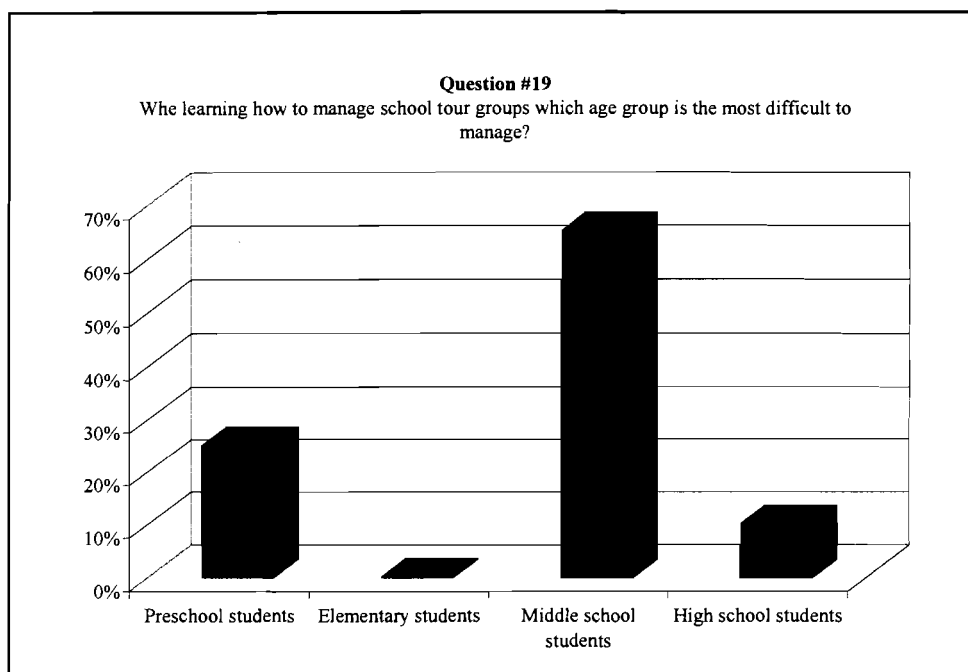
None of the survey respondents reported that it was very difficult to develop a 1 hour tour (question #18). Two or 10% of survey participants reported that it was difficult to develop a 1 hour tour. One or 5% of survey participants reported that they had no opinion on the difficulty of developing a 1 hour tour. Eleven or 55% of survey participants found it somewhat difficult to develop a 1 hour tour. Six or 30% of survey participants reported that it was not difficult to develop a 1 hour tour. (Figure 18a)

**Figure 18a: Question 18**

*When Learning How to Manage School Tour Groups Which Age Group is the Most  
Difficult to Manage?*

When learning how to manage school tour groups 25% or 5 participants reported that preschool students were the group that is the most difficult to manage (Question #19). None of the respondents reported that elementary students were the group that is the most difficult to manage. Sixty-five percent or 13 participants responded that middle school students are the group that is the most difficult to manage. Ten percent or 2 participants reported that high school students were the group that is the most difficult to manage. Please see figure 19a.

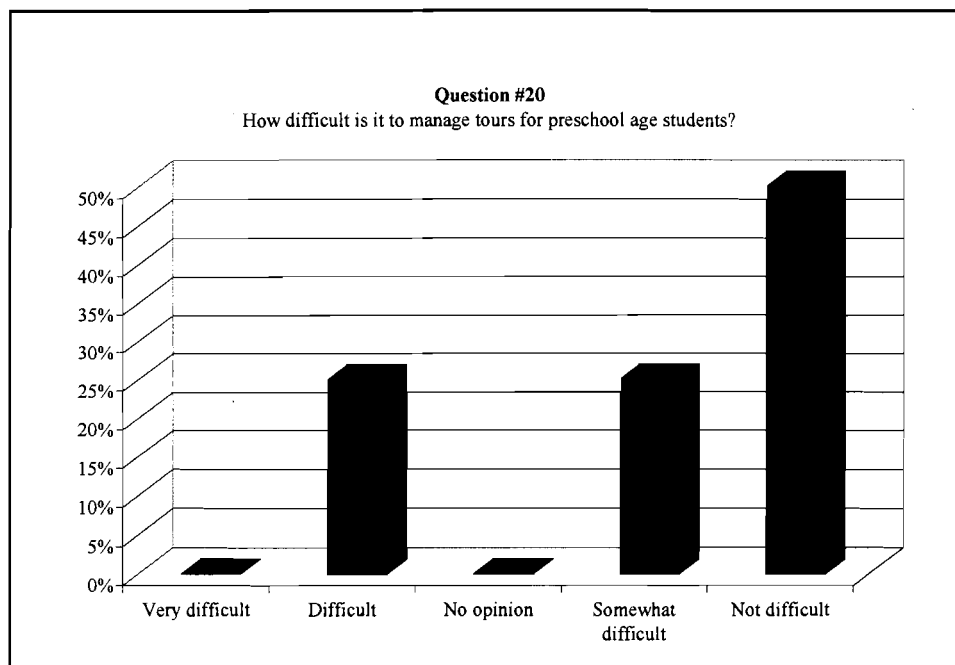
**Figure 19a: Question 19**



*How difficult is it to Manage Tours for Preschool Age Students?*

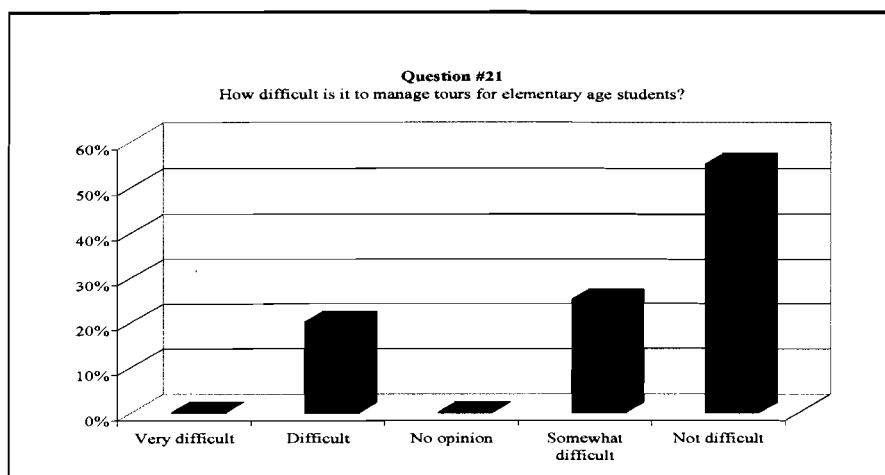
In response to question #20 (figure 20a) none of the survey participants found it very difficult to manage tours for preschool age students. Five or 25% of respondents found it difficult to manage tours for preschool age students. None of the respondents reported having no opinion on how difficult it was to manage tours for preschool age students. Five or 25% of respondents found it somewhat difficult to manage tours for preschool age students. Ten or 50% of respondents found it not difficult to manage tours for preschool age students.

**Figure 20a: Question 20**



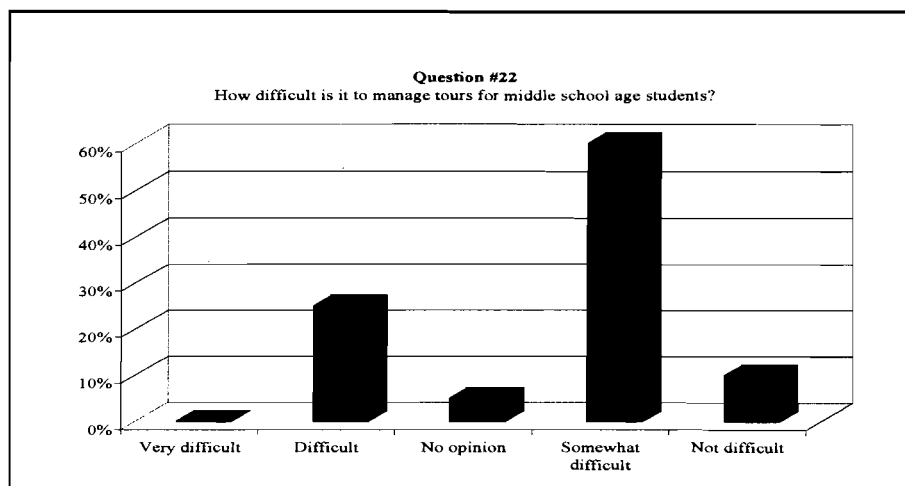
*How difficult is it to Manage Tours for Elementary Age Students?*

In regards to question #21 (figure 21a) none of the survey participants found it very difficult to manage tours for elementary age students. Four or 20% of participants found it difficult to manage tours for elementary age students. None of the respondents reported having no opinion on how difficult it was to manage tours for elementary age students. Five or 25% of participants reported that it was somewhat difficult to manage tours for elementary age students. Eleven or 55% of participants did not find it difficult to manage tour for elementary age students.

**Figure 21a: Question 21**

*How difficult is it to Manage Tours for Middle School Age Students?*

In response to question #22 (figure 22a) none of the respondents found it very difficult to manage tours for middle school age students. Twenty percent or 5 respondents found it difficult to manage tours for middle school age students. Five percent or 1 respondent had no opinion about the difficulty of managing middle school age students. Sixty percent or 12 respondents found it somewhat difficult to manage tours for middle school age students. Ten percent or 2 respondents found it not difficult to manage tours for middle school age students.

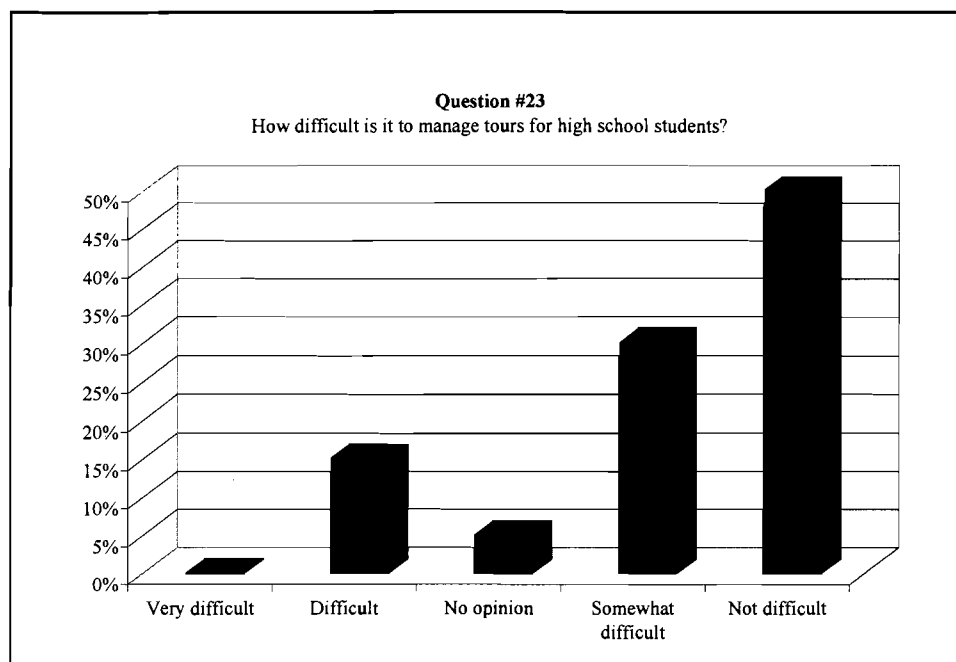
**Figure 22a: Question 22**



*How difficult is it to Manage Tours for High School Students?*

In regards to question #23 (figure 23a) none of the respondents found it very difficult to manage tours for high school students. Three or 15% of respondents found it difficult to manage tours for high school students. One or 5% of respondents had no opinion about the difficulty of managing tours for high school students. Six or 30% of respondents found it somewhat difficult to manage tours for high school students. Ten or 50% of respondents found it not difficult to manage tours for high school students.

**Figure 23a: Question 23**



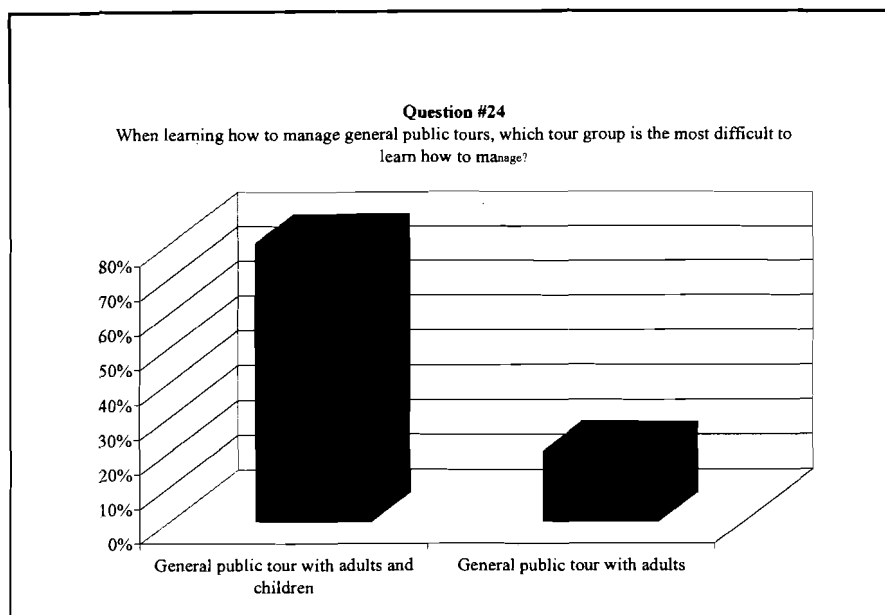
*When Learning How to Manage General Public Tours, Which Tour Group is the Most Difficult to Learn How to Manage?*

Eighty percent or 16 survey participants responded that when learning how to manage general public tours, general public tours with adults and children were the most difficult to manage (question #24). Twenty percent or 4 participants responded that

general public tours with adults was the tour group that was the most difficult to manage.

Please see figure 24a.

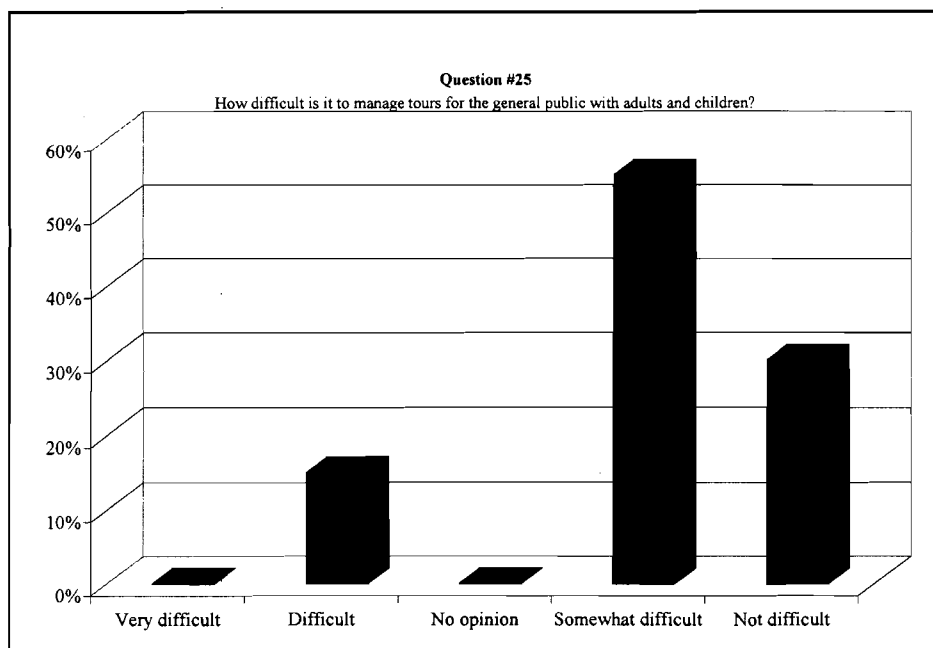
**Figure 24a: Question 24**



*How difficult is it to Manage Tours for the General Public with Adults and Children?*

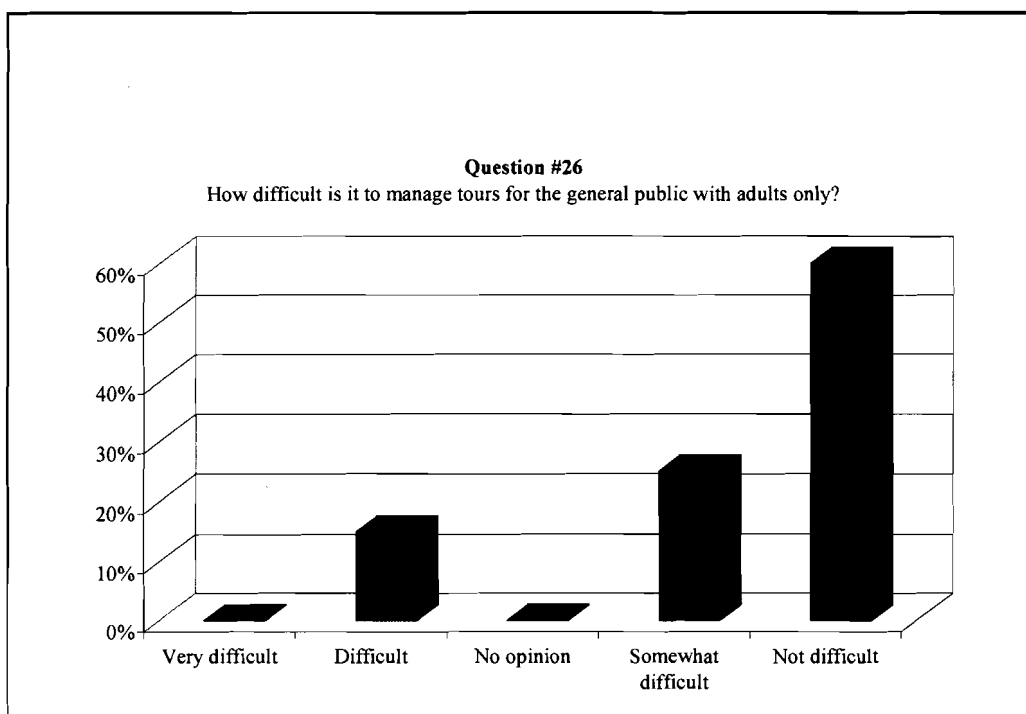
None of the survey respondents found it very difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults and children (question #25). Three or 15% of participants reported that it was difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults and children. None of the survey respondents reported having no opinion about how difficult it is to manage tours for the general public with adults and children. Eleven or 55% of participants found it somewhat difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults and children. Six or 30% of participants found it not difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults and children. Please see figure 25a.

**Figure 25a: Question 25**



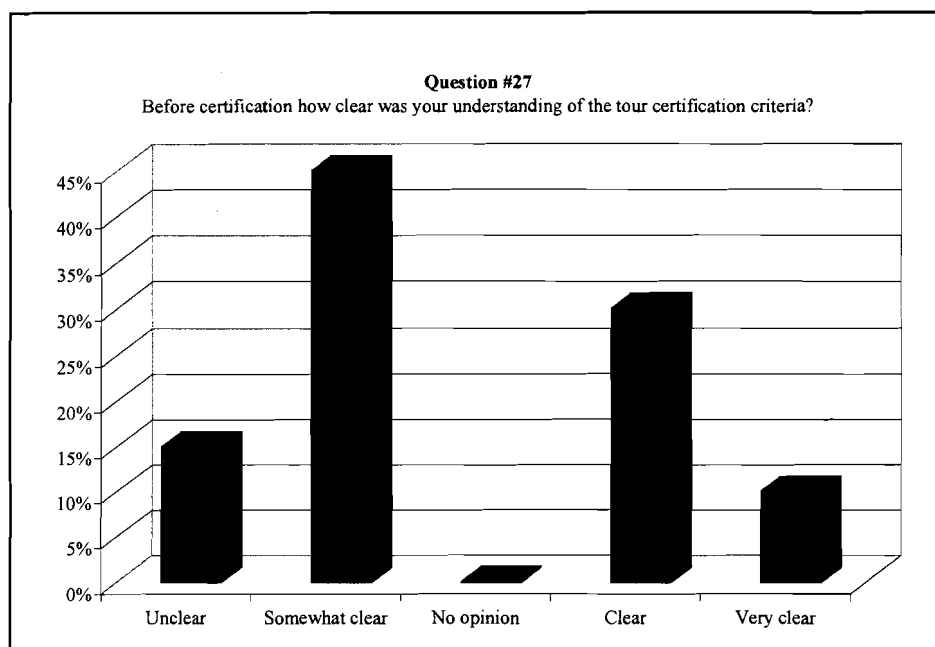
*How difficult is it to Manage Tours for the General Public with Adults Only?*

None of the survey respondents found it very difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults only (question #26). Three or 15% of participants reported that it was difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults only. None of the survey respondents reported having no opinion about how difficult it is to manage tours for the general public with adults only. Five or 25% of participants found it somewhat difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults only. Twelve or 60% of participants found it not difficult to manage tours for the general public with adults only. Please see figure 26a.

**Figure 26a: Question 26**

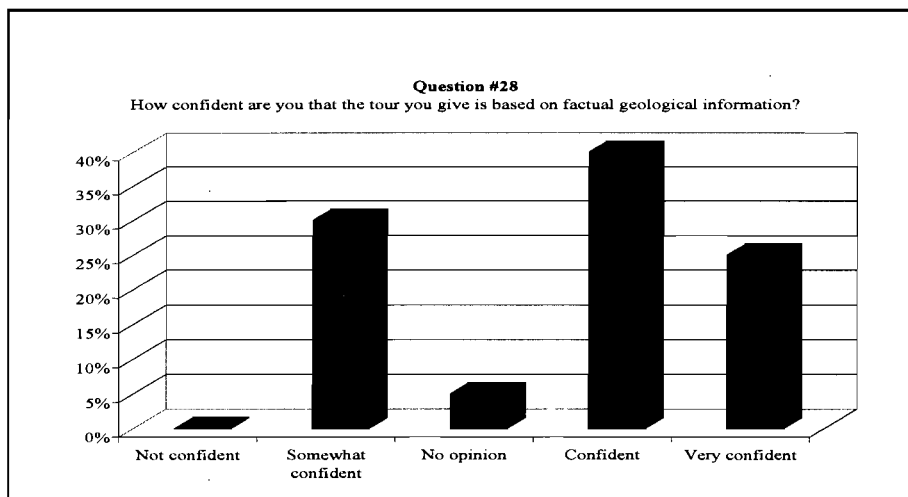
*Before Certification How Clear was your Understanding of the Tour Certification Criteria?*

In regards to question #27 (figure 27a) 15% or 3 participants reported that their understanding of the tour certification criteria was unclear before certification. Forty-five percent or 9 participants reported that their understanding of the tour certification criteria was somewhat clear before certification. None of the survey participants reported having no opinion about their understanding of the tour certification criteria before certification. Thirty percent or 6 participants reported that their understanding of the tour certification criteria was clear before certification. Ten percent or 2 participants reported that their understanding of the tour certification criteria was clear before certification.

**Figure 27a: Question 27**

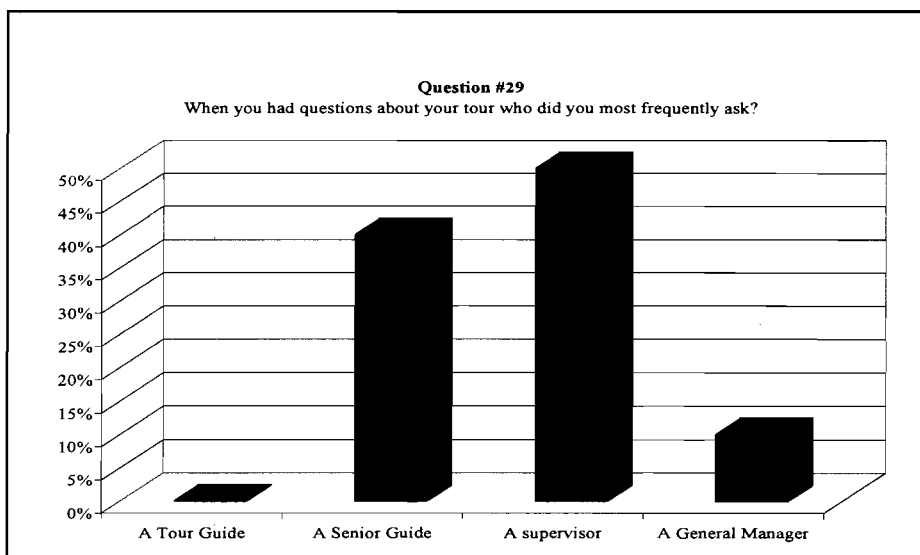
*How Confident are you that the Tour you give is based on Factual Geological Information?*

None of the survey respondents reported being not confident that the tour they give is based on factual geological information (question #28). Six or 30% of respondents were somewhat confident that the tour they give is based on factual geological information. One or 5% of respondents had no opinion that the tour they give is based on factual geological information. Eight or 40% of respondents reported that they were confident that the tour they give is based on factual geological information. Five or 25% of participants reported that they were very confident that the tour they give is based on factual geological information. Please see figure 28a.

**Figure 28a: Question 28**

*When you had Questions about your Tour who did you most Frequently Ask?*

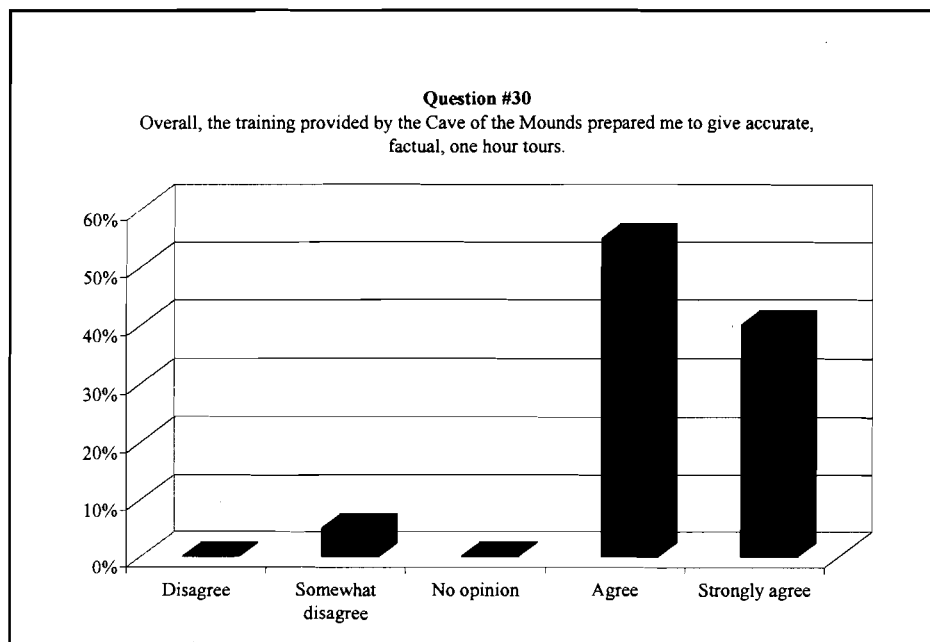
In response to question #29 (figure 29a) none of the participants reported that they went to another tour guide when they had questions about the tour. Forty percent or 8 participants reported that they went to a senior guide when they had question about the tour. Fifty percent or 10 participants went to a supervisor when they had questions about the tour. Ten percent or 2 participants went to a general manager when they had questions about the tour.

**Figure 29a: Question 29**

*Overall, the Training Provided by the Cave of the Mounds Prepared me to give Accurate, Factual, 1 hour Tours.*

None of the survey respondents disagreed, with the statement “overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give accurate, factual, 1 hour tours (question #30).” Five percent or 1 respondent somewhat disagreed with the above statement. None of the survey respondents reported having no opinion about the statement. Fifty-five percent or 11 respondents agreed with the statement “overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give accurate, factual, 1 hour tours.” Forty percent or 8 respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Please see figure 30a.

**Figure 30a: Question 30**



*Please add any Ideas you have Regarding the Improvement of Tour Guide Training.*

The survey participants were asked to add any ideas they have regarding the improvement of tour guide training. The following are the written responses to question #31. The responses appear exactly as they did on the survey.

- When in training it would be a good idea to be able to or given a chance to trail as many different guides as possible as long as they give a confident tour.
- Training to deal with special needs individuals.
- Personally, I was involved in public speaking since I was a child, so I found virtually no difficulties learning material, just dealing with the groups.
- I think it would be helpful to have a larger variety of tours, perhaps changing the focus or emphasis of the tour regularly. This may help enhance or deepen a tour guide's knowledge of the history, science, social history, etc. of the cave.
- Overall, I think the training system works well, however, I think improvements and new ideas are always helpful!
- I would like to learn more geological information as well as historical information so that I can change my tour to better fit the needs of the people on my tour.
  - I think the handbook is helpful but hands-on holds its merits as well...for people who have trouble learning by reading, the handbook can be overwhelming. Maybe we could explore other methods of training?
- I like the fact that we feel comfortable enough to ask one another questions rather than just one person. It's nice to be able to get other people's opinions or ideas.
- Hopefully this will help with training of new guides, so they don't seem so lost when collection two-way tickets, lights, and flow with tours.



- I think that there needs to be training in related to dispatch duties and tour guides beginning the tours. Especially during our peak season when dispatchers do not have time to count collected tokens, find missing ticket holders, and start tours for guides who are capable of doing so.
- Although the training provided gives you adequate training, it does not provide enough to answer more detailed or in-depth questions. Also, the cave formations booklet would be a valuable tool!
- It might be good to trail a tour given by a supervisor.
- More “people skills” training for use on tours would be helpful. Also, more information about cave details would be beneficial.
  - On-going training “as-is” is unnecessary and redundant for guides not in their first year. Guides should have a written test for knowledge – instead of simply memorizing a tour.

*Please add any Additional Comments.*

Question #32 asked for any additional comments. There were no additional comments on any of the surveys. The additional comments data from questions #31 and #32 seem to suggest that overall tour guides are happy with the new employee orientation training they received as new tour guides. Many of the comments refer to on-going training such as: regularly trailing other tour guides including trailing supervisors, so tour guides can constantly update and change their tour. Other comments suggest that there be training focused on providing tour guides with more in-depth factual geological information so that tour guides are better prepared to answer visitor’s detailed questions. Other ideas included, providing tour guides with more historical information about the

cave so tour guides would be able to change the direction of the tour depending on the interests of the visitors on the tour.

### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to investigate what employee orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training evaluation program for new tour guides. Data were gathered from a new employee training survey which provided perspectives about the perceptions about the training employees received as new tour guides at the Cave of the Mounds.

Patterns emerging from the new employee training survey suggest that Cave of the Mounds employees are satisfied with the new employee training they received at the Cave of the Mounds. The majority (95%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give, accurate, factual, 1 hour tours."

Sixty-five percent of respondents were confident or very confident that the information they give on their tour is based on factual geological information. However thirty-five percent of respondents indicated that they were somewhat confident that the geological information give on their tour is based on facts.

Survey participants were asked "before certification how clear was your understanding of the tour certification criteria," sixty percent of survey respondents reported that they were unclear or somewhat clear of the tour certification criteria. Forty percent of respondents were clear or very clear about the certification criteria before certification.

The majority of survey participants (70%) reported that the most difficult general public group to manage is general public tour groups with adults and children. Sixty-five percent of participants responded that middle school students are the group that is the most difficult to manage.

Data seem to suggest that when learning the tour most respondents had the most difficulty with building their tour and making it flow from room to room, and working the lighting system. Forty percent of respondents found it difficult to build their tour and make it flow from room to room. Thirty percent of survey respondents found working the lighting system also seemed to be a difficult task when learning the tour for most guides. Twenty percent found it difficult to develop a 1 hour tour.

Data seems to suggest that tour guides learn the tour primarily from trailing other tour guides but also from talking to more advanced tour guides, and from reading informational resources provided by the Cave of the Mounds. Sixty percent of participants reported that trailing other tour guides was their primary source for learning the tour. Twenty percent of participants reported that talking to more advanced tour guides was their primary source for learning the tour. However, data seems to suggest that 85% of respondents found the Cave of the Mounds Handbook was helpful in developing their tour.

## Chapter V: Discussion

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to investigate what employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training program for new tour guides. The primary goal of this study is to develop a certification evaluation program for new tour guides which will increase tour uniformity and insure accurate and consistent information within a 1 hour time frame. The study included a survey which consisted of a Likert-type scale with statements designed to assess the attitudes toward the current new employee training program. There were additional open ended questions designed to assess tour guide's opinions and views of ways to improve the current training program. A list was generated by the researcher that included all new tour guides, returning tour guides, and supervisors. In this chapter, the major findings of the study are identified and discussed. Possible factors which impacted the findings are identified. Implications from the study are presented.

### *Limitations*

For the purpose of this study the limitations include, the survey was designed by the researcher and has not been proven a valid instrument to measure the perceptions of the study participants. The study has a limited sample size which includes all employees at the Cave of the Mounds who are certified tour guides; due to the small number of employees the results maybe restricted. There was no control over the reliability of the surveys completed by the new tour guides, returning tour guides, and supervisors of the Cave of the Mounds and the participants could have lied on their surveys. The

respondents to the surveys may not have given answers that truly reflect their attitudes and thus results may have been biased.

### *Conclusions*

New employee training survey questions were designed to provide information regarding employees' perspectives about the perceptions about the training employees received as new tour guides at the Cave of the Mounds. Examples of training programs in the tourism industry that create a productive workforce, improve quality and generate loyalty, include pre-leadership training programs and training programs that bring employees together to sharpen their skills and share ideas. (McFerrin-Peters & Rosenbluth, 2002)

Datas to suggest that tour guides learn the tour primarily from trailing other tour guides but also from talking to more advanced tour guides, and from reading informational resources provided by the Cave of the Mounds. Training programs are most successful when accompanied by a comprehensive manual that describes operational standards and procedures, especially if the handbook documents organizational and employee successes throughout the organizations' existence (McFerrin-Peters & Rosenbluth, 2002).

In the tourism industry it is important to provide coaching for all employees. Coaching reinforces the idea that new employees should not be taken directly from training to their new positions to discover the ways of the working environment by themselves (Kirkpatrick, 1983). Instead of new tour guides having to seek out more advanced tour guides with questions there should be designated employees that new tour

guides should go to with any questions. New tour guides should be introduced to these designated employees and be aware that these advance tour guides or supervisors are their too 'coach' them through the training process and are available to help them. It is recommended that new employee training begin with basic job requirements and technical training followed by on-the-job training in a controlled environment facilitated by experienced coaches (McFerrin-Peters & Rosenbluth, 2005).

Many new employees learn by modeling and through experiences so organizations need to ensure that these illustrations and experiences are ones that they want to reinforce (McFerrin-Peters & Rosenbluth, 2002). Tour guides at the Cave of the Mounds learn their tour primarily from trailing more advanced tour guides; hence they are modeling these employees. It is recommended that new employees be given resources and references to facilitate the orientation process so newcomers can share in the responsibility of learning about their respective job duties (Hickman & Roderer, 2002). Examples of resources include self-study materials, training, observation, and participation in coaching or mentoring opportunities.

When recreating a new employee orientation program there are some key questions employers should ask themselves. Employers should think about the impressions they want to make on new employees, what key policies and procedures new employees should be aware of on the first day to avoid making mistakes, what tools should new employees be given to ensure success, and how can supervisors be made available to new employees to help them achieve success (Starcke, 1996). Survey participants were asked "before certification how clear was your understanding of the tour certification criteria," sixty percent of survey respondents reported that they were

unclear or somewhat clear of the tour certification criteria. Forty percent of respondents were clear or very clear about the certification criteria before certification. At the Cave of the Mounds there needs to be clear certification criteria for all new tour guides. All tour guides should know what is expected of them before attempting to be certified. There should be a clear list of what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to be a successful certified tour guide.

There are certain objectives that should be met in all new employee orientation programs. They include: new employees should be made to feel welcomed, new employees should understand the organization in a broad sense as well as specifics in key areas, and new employees should be clear about what is expected in terms of work, behavior, and job skills (Hickman & Roderer, 2000). When these objectives are met, new employees are most often very satisfied with the training program. The program is considered a successful program and new employees will thrive in their new working environment. Patterns emerging from the new employee training survey suggest that Cave of the Mounds employees are satisfied with the new employee training they received at the Cave of the Mounds. The majority (95%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give, accurate, factual, 1 hour tours." The data also seem to suggest that the training at the Cave of the Mounds prepared the new tour guides to conduct tours based on factual geological information. Sixty-five percent of respondents were confident or very confident that the information they give on their tour is based on factual geological information.

### *Recommendations*

Cave of the Mounds is one of the largest tourist attractions in Southern Wisconsin it is visited by ten's of thousands of tourists each year. However, due to the peak tourist season between May and September for most of the year the Cave of the Mounds is run by a handful of staff members. During the peak season approximately 15 tour guides are hired or return from the previous summer to work at the Cave of the Mounds during the busy summer months. This is why it is imperative that the Cave of the Mounds provide successful orientation training program for new tour guides which is not only thorough and fast paced, but also allows new tour guides to gain the knowledge, skill, abilities, to develop accurate, factual, one hour tours.

Based on the results of the new employee training survey it is recommended that the Cave of the Mounds add an evaluation process to its training program. By testing new tour guides on their knowledge before training and after, the Cave of the Mounds will know what skills area tour guides will need on-going training in and also the Cave of the Mounds will know that each tour guide who goes through this training will gain the same level of skill, knowledge, and ability. It is recommended that new employees continue to be given resources and references to facilitate the orientation process so newcomers can share in the responsibility of learning about their respective job duties.

At the Cave of the Mounds there needs to be clear certification criteria for all new tour guides. All tour guides should know what is expected of them before attempting to be certified. It is recommended that new tour guides be given a clear list of what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to be a successful certified tour guide. Keeping with this recommendation it is also suggested that new tour guides be given a



checklist to take with them while trailing tours. This checklist should be developed from the Cave of the Mounds Employee Handbook. The goal of the checklist is to help new tour guides design a 1 hour tour. The checklist will help new tour guides key into group management skills, correct factual information, and successful transitions while trailing more advanced guides.

Finally, it is recommended that instead of new tour guides seeking out more advanced tour guides with questions there should be designated employees that new tour guides should go to with questions. New tour guides should be introduced to these designated employees, as soon as possible, and be aware that these advance tour guides or supervisors are their too 'coach' them through the training process and are available to help them

The majority of the survey respondents agreed with the statement "overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give, accurate, factual, 1 hour tours." The previous recommendations will only help the Cave the Mounds to continue to provide premier new employee training.

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APPENDIX A  
NEW EMPLOYEE TRAINING SURVEY

## Appendix A: New Employee Training Survey

**This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.**

### Consent to Participate in UW-Stout Approved Research

**Title:** Assessment of Tour Guide Training at the Cave of the Mounds

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**Description:** The purpose of the study is to determine what new employee training orientation program will facilitate a successful certification training evaluation program for new tour guides at the Cave of the Mounds.

**Risks and Benefits:**

Any potential risks are exceedingly small. The information is being sought in a specific manner so that no identifiers are needed and confidentiality is guaranteed.

**Time Commitment:**

Please take a few minutes now to answer the questions contained in this envelope. Answer completely and honestly. Upon completion, refold the questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided by July 15, 2005 in the box marked 'surveys' by the time clock.

**Confidentiality:**

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be included on any documents. Only the primary researcher will have access to the confidential raw data.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. However, if you choose to participate and later withdraw from the study, there is no way to identify your document after it has been turned into the researcher.

**IRB Approval:**

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the researcher or Advisor. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

**Statement of Consent:**

By completing the following survey you agree to participate in the project entitled, "Assessment of Tour Guide Training at the Cave of the Mounds."

### **New Employee Training Survey**

I would like your opinions regarding your overall perceptions about the training you received as a new tour guide at the Cave of the Mounds. Please answer all questions honestly and completely. Please keep in mind that your responses will be anonymous and only the researcher will see your responses. You have the right to withdrawal from this study at any time.

1. How long have you been a tour guide at the Cave of the Mounds?

New Hire                      1-2 years                      3-5 years                      6+ years

2. What is your current position?

Tour Guide                      Senior Guide                      Supervisor

3. How long did it take you to become a certified tour guide?

Less than 2 Days      3 Days      4 Days      5 Days      6+ Days

4. What is your geological background?

\_\_\_\_ Limited  
\_\_\_\_ Some Knowledge  
\_\_\_\_ Very Knowledgeable

5. When learning the tour how long did you spend reviewing the Cave of the Mounds Handbook? (Please mark which applies)

\_\_\_\_ Less than a Half an Hour  
\_\_\_\_ 1-2 Hours  
\_\_\_\_ 3-4 Hours  
\_\_\_\_ 5+ Hours

6. When learning the tour what was the total time spent on reviewing the Cave Formation Book? (Please mark which applies)

\_\_\_\_ Less than a Half an Hour  
\_\_\_\_ 1-2 Hours  
\_\_\_\_ 3-4 Hours  
\_\_\_\_ 5+ Hours

7. Which option best describes how you learned the lighting system in the cave?

\_\_\_\_ Went into the cave and "play around with the lights"

- \_\_\_\_ Staff personal took you into the cave and demonstrated how the lights worked.
- \_\_\_\_ Observed and learned the process by trailing another tour guide.

8. Once becoming certified, how long was it before you were completely comfortable working the lighting system in the cave

- \_\_\_\_ Less than one week
- \_\_\_\_ One week
- \_\_\_\_ More than one week but less than two weeks
- \_\_\_\_ Two weeks
- \_\_\_\_ More than two weeks

9. What was your primary source for learning the tour?

- \_\_\_\_ Trailing other tour guides
- \_\_\_\_ The Cave of the Mounds Handbook
- \_\_\_\_ The Cave Formation Book
- \_\_\_\_ Talking to more advanced tour guides

10. When developing your tour how helpful was it to trail other tour guides?

Not helpful\_\_\_\_ Somewhat helpful\_\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_\_ Helpful\_\_\_\_ Very helpful\_\_\_\_

11. When developing your tour how helpful was the Cave of the Mounds Employee Handbook in developing your tour?

Not helpful\_\_\_\_ Somewhat helpful\_\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_\_ Helpful\_\_\_\_ Very helpful\_\_\_\_

12. When developing your tour how helpful was the Cave Formation Book?

Not helpful\_\_\_\_ Somewhat helpful\_\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_\_ Helpful\_\_\_\_ Very helpful\_\_\_\_

13. When developing your tour how helpful was talking to more advanced guides?

Not helpful\_\_\_\_ Somewhat helpful\_\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_\_ Helpful\_\_\_\_ Very helpful\_\_\_\_

14. When learning the tour what did you have the most difficulty with?

- \_\_\_\_ Memorizing the tour
- \_\_\_\_ Learning about cave formations
- \_\_\_\_ Learning how to manage your tour groups
- \_\_\_\_ Working the lighting system
- \_\_\_\_ Developing a one hour tour
- \_\_\_\_ Building your tour and making it flow from room to room

15. How difficult was it to memorize the tour?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

16. How difficult was it to learn about cave formations?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

17. How difficult was it to learn the lighting system in the cave?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

18. How difficult was it to develop a one hour tour?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

19. When learning how to manage school tour groups which age group is the most difficult to manage?

- \_\_\_ Preschool Students
- \_\_\_ Elementary Students
- \_\_\_ Middle school Students
- \_\_\_ High school Students

20. How difficult is it to manage tours for preschool age students?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

21. How difficult is it to manage tours for elementary age students?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

22. How difficult is it to manage tours for middle school age students?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

23. How difficult is it to manage tour for high school students?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

24. When learning how to manage general public tours, which tour group is the most difficult to learn how to manage?

- \_\_\_ General public tour with adults and children
- \_\_\_ General public tour with adults

25. How difficult is it to manage tours for the general public with adults and children?



Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

26. How difficult is it to manage tours for the general public with adults only?

Very difficult\_\_\_ Difficult\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Somewhat difficult\_\_\_ Not Difficult\_\_\_

27. Before certification how clear was your understanding of the tour certification criteria?

Unclear\_\_\_ Somewhat clear\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Clear\_\_\_ Very clear\_\_\_

28. How confident are you that the tour you give is based on factual geological information?

Not confident\_\_\_ Somewhat confident\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Confident\_\_\_ Very confident\_\_\_

29. When you had questions about your tour who did you most frequently ask?

- \_\_\_ A Tour Guide
- \_\_\_ A Senior Guide
- \_\_\_ A Supervisor
- \_\_\_ A General Manager

30. Overall, the training provided by the Cave of the Mounds prepared me to give accurate, factual, one hour tours.

Disagree\_\_\_ Somewhat disagree\_\_\_ No opinion\_\_\_ Agree\_\_\_ Strongly Agree\_\_\_

31. Please add any ideas you have regarding the improvement of tour guide training?

32. Please add any additional comments.